

PLANNING STATEMENT

**221A Whitefield Drive, Westvale, Kirkby,
Knowsley, L32 0RB**

**Change of use of a dwellinghouse (Use Class C3)
to a children's residential care home (Use Class C2)**

Applicant	Linacre Children's Homes Ltd / James Rourke
Registered Office	Rose Hill House, Pygons Hill Lane, Lydiate, L31 4JF
Occupancy	Maximum of one child aged 7–17
Care	24-hour care and supervision
Staffing	Up to two carers on duty at any time, working a rota basis
Building works	No internal structural or external alterations proposed

Detailed planning statement for the proposed use of 221A Whitefield Drive, Kirkby, Knowsley, L32 0RB as a small residential children's home within Use Class C2.

1. Introduction

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of the proposed change of use of 221A Whitefield Drive from a dwellinghouse within Use Class C3 to a small children's residential care home within Use Class C2.

The proposed home would provide accommodation for a maximum of one child aged between 7 and 17 years, with 24-hour care and supervision provided by up to two carers on duty at any one time. Staff would work on a rota basis so that the child receives consistent care within a stable, domestic environment.

This statement should be read alongside the submitted application form, floor plans and other supporting information. Its purpose is to describe the existing and proposed use, explain the operational model, and assess the likely effects of the proposal on residential character, neighbouring amenity, traffic, parking and the general functioning of the area.

The central planning issue is one of fact and degree: although the proposed use falls within a different use class, the practical character and intensity of the use should be considered in light of the very small scale of the home, the domestic pattern of occupation and the absence of physical enlargement or external alteration.

2. Application Site

The application site is an existing two-storey residential property at 221A Whitefield Drive, Westvale, Kirkby, Knowsley, L32 0RB, within an established residential area.

The submitted layout identifies approximately 38.1 sq. metres (410.3 sq. feet) at ground-floor level and approximately 32.9 sq. metres (354.6 sq. feet) at first-floor level, giving an indicated total internal area of approximately 71.1 sq. metres (764.9 sq. feet).

The ground floor is shown with a kitchen/diner, communal lounge, storage, entrance vestibule, WC and staircase. The first floor is shown with three principal rooms, a bathroom and landing. The application relates to the use of the existing building; no internal structural or external alterations are proposed.

The property benefits from existing pedestrian and vehicular access and the applicant's supporting information identifies on-site parking via the existing driveway. The surrounding locality provides access to shops, schools, public transport and community facilities.

3. Proposed Development

The application seeks permission for the property to operate as a small residential children's home within Use Class C2. The home would accommodate one child only, aged 7–17, with 24-hour supervision.

The care model is deliberately small. The child would live at the property as their home and would use the ordinary domestic facilities of the dwelling, including the kitchen, lounge, bathroom and external amenity areas, in a manner comparable to family occupation.

Up to two carers would be present at any one time. The carers would be responsible for the child's day-to-day welfare and routine, including preparing meals, maintaining the home, supporting education, accompanying the child to appointments and activities, and helping the child develop independence and life skills.

The home is intended to provide warmth, stability and security within a normal domestic setting rather than an institutional environment. The single-child model enables care to be individualised while keeping the intensity of occupation low.

4. Existing and Proposed Layout

The proposal does not require an extension or a material alteration to the external appearance of the building. The residential scale, footprint and appearance of the property would remain unchanged.

The submitted floor-plan image is reproduced below as part of this statement. It shows the existing domestic arrangement and the intended allocation of rooms for the proposed use.

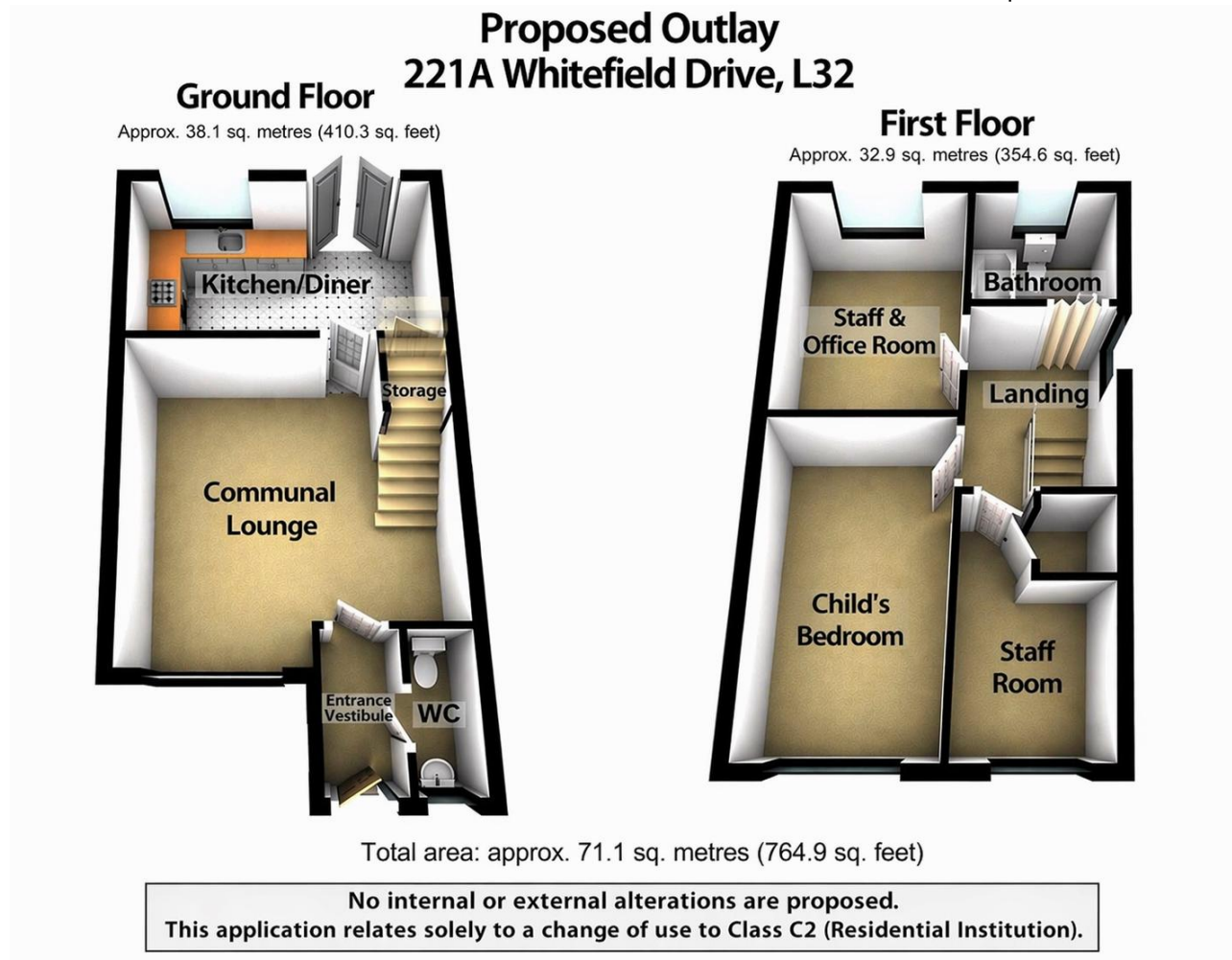


Figure 1 – Submitted ground- and first-floor layout for 221A Whitefield Drive.

The plan itself states that no internal or external alterations are proposed and that the application relates solely to the change of use to Class C2.

5. Staffing and Operational Arrangements

The home would operate 24 hours a day because it is the child's residence. This should not be interpreted as continuous commercial activity. The staffing arrangement is structured around a small care team and planned shift handovers.

Two care staff will be present at the premises during the daytime operating period, normally from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Overnight cover will be provided by sleeping-in staff so that the child or young person continues to receive 24-hour care and supervision.

Staff attendance and handovers will be managed through the home's rota arrangements. The staffing model is deliberately limited to two care staff at the premises, with overnight sleeping-in cover, so that activity remains small-scale and residential in character.

A Registered Manager will have overall responsibility for the home. The Manager's normal working hours will be approximately 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; however, the Manager will not be permanently based at the property and will attend as operationally required. Duties will include oversight of care delivery, safeguarding, staff supervision, placement planning, liaison with placing authorities and professionals, regulatory compliance and quality assurance.

The overall operational model therefore remains low intensity: one resident, two care staff at the premises, sleeping-in overnight cover, a Manager who is not permanently based at the home, and limited professional visits.

6. Additional Needs and Conditions of the Child

Whitefield House will provide residential care for a maximum of one child or young person aged 7–17 years at any one time. The service is intended for children and young people who may present with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD), including difficulties associated with Adverse Childhood Experiences, and who may also have additional complex needs requiring targeted intervention and support.

As no individual child has been identified for placement at the planning application stage, it is not possible to specify the particular additional needs or conditions of the future resident. Any proposed placement will be considered individually before admission through referral, assessment, matching and impact-risk-assessment procedures.

Prior to admission, consideration will be given to the child or young person's assessed needs, risks, vulnerabilities, behaviours, education, health and emotional wellbeing, together with the potential impact of the placement. The purpose of this assessment is to ensure that Whitefield House can safely and appropriately meet the individual's needs.

Whitefield House will provide 24-hour wraparound support in a safe, nurturing and supportive family-style environment. Support may include social and emotional development, mental-health support, recreation, personal development, education and practical life skills. Planned placements and positive transitions are preferred. Emergency or same-day placements may be considered where necessary, subject to an appropriate impact assessment before admission.

7. Social Worker and Professional Visits

A social worker is expected to visit the child or young person approximately once per month. In addition, weekly professional meetings may take place remotely using Microsoft Teams, reducing the need for additional journeys to and from the property.

Other professional attendance will be arranged according to the individual needs of the child or young person and the requirements of the placing authority. Such visits will be directly associated with the care and welfare of the single resident and are not expected to create a significant level of additional activity.

8. Nature and Character of the Proposed Use

The child's occupation of the property would be residential. Daily life would include sleeping, eating, relaxing, studying, attending school, taking part in leisure activities and spending time with carers in the same way that ordinary household activity takes place within a family home.

The carers' role is different in legal terms from that of parents, but in practical day-to-day terms their activities within the property are domestic in nature. They would cook, clean, supervise, support routines, transport or accompany the child where necessary and maintain the home.

The proposed use would therefore retain a domestic ambience and pattern of activity. There would be no public-facing service, customer visits, signage, commercial deliveries or institutional alterations associated with the use.

9. Traffic, Parking and Accessibility

The proposal has been designed to keep vehicle movements modest. The property has on-site parking via the existing driveway, and the limited staffing arrangement means that parking demand would be constrained.

Vehicle movements associated with staff will arise principally from planned shift attendance and handovers. With only two care staff at the premises, sleeping-in overnight cover, and a Manager who is not permanently based at the home, the overall level of staff-related movement is expected to remain modest.

For comparison, a conventional household occupying a three-bedroom dwelling may generate regular journeys for work, school, shopping, healthcare, recreation, deliveries and visits by friends and family. The proposed single-child care model would likewise generate ordinary residential journeys, but its staffing is controlled by rota.

On the information supplied, the proposal is not expected to create a level of traffic or parking demand materially out of keeping with the residential setting.

10. Residential Amenity – Comings and Goings

The principal change in comings and goings arises from staff shift changes and occasional professional visits. These movements would be predictable and limited.

The proposed home would not accommodate multiple unrelated residents or operate with a large workforce. With one child and up to two carers, the number of persons normally present would remain small.

Professional visits connected with the child's care would be occasional rather than daily. Family contact and community activities would be managed as part of the child's individual care arrangements.

The resulting pattern of occupation would therefore remain recognisably residential and is not expected to result in an unacceptable intensification of activity.

11. Noise, Disturbance and Privacy

The applicant's supporting information states that soundproofing measures have been undertaken within the property to support privacy and minimise potential disturbance.

Only one child would reside at the home. This is an important factor when considering intensity of use and the potential for noise. The home would also operate under professional management arrangements, safeguarding procedures, behaviour support planning and complaints procedures.

No external alterations or new external activity areas are proposed. On this basis, and having regard to the single-child occupancy and staffing arrangements, the proposal is intended to safeguard the residential amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

12. Safeguarding and Management

Linacre Children's Homes Ltd would operate the home within the regulatory framework applicable to children's residential care. The applicant's supporting information states that the service works with safeguarding procedures and the Philomena Protocol, supporting partnership working with local authorities and police services where required.

The home would be managed to provide a safe, stable and nurturing environment. Care planning would be individual to the child, with professional oversight and liaison with relevant agencies.

The planning application concerns land use and amenity considerations. Ofsted registration is a separate regulatory process; the applicant has explained that confirmation of the C2 planning position is required to progress the registration of this home.

13. Character and Appearance

There are no proposed extensions or external alterations. The property would retain the appearance of an ordinary residential home and there would be no physical feature identifying it as an institutional premises.

The domestic layout and small scale of occupation reinforce the residential character of the use. The proposal therefore seeks to integrate the home into the existing neighbourhood rather than create a visibly different form of development.

14. Planning Policy Context

The relevant development plan for this site is Knowsley's adopted planning policy framework. The proposal should be assessed against the policies applicable to development in residential areas, development quality, amenity, accessibility and sustainable development, together with relevant national planning policy.

The application site lies within Knowsley. The proposal should therefore be assessed against the development plan and other material planning considerations applicable to 221A Whitefield Drive, together with relevant national planning policy and case law.

The proposal makes use of an existing dwelling in an established residential area, involves no enlargement of the building and provides a small-scale social-care use in a domestic setting. These characteristics are relevant when assessing sustainability, residential amenity, character and highway effects.

15. Other Material Considerations

13.1 Social Benefit

The proposal would provide a home for a child who requires residential care in a small, community-based setting. The care model is intended to promote stability, individual support, education, community participation and the development of life skills.

The social benefit of providing appropriate accommodation for looked-after children is a material consideration in the overall planning balance, alongside the need to ensure that the location and operation of the home are acceptable in land-use terms.

13.2 Fear of Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

The planning assessment should be based on the actual characteristics of the proposed use and evidence of likely effects. A child living in residential care should not be assumed, solely because of their care status, to generate crime, anti-social behaviour or unacceptable disturbance.

Any behavioural or safeguarding matters arising from the individual child's needs would be managed through the home's professional care and safeguarding arrangements. The planning question remains whether the proposed use, as operated, would create a material land-use impact.

16. Case Law – North Devon

North Devon District Council v First Secretary of State [2003] EWHC 157 (Admin) is an important authority concerning the distinction between C2 and C3 children's-home uses and the separate question of whether a change between use classes is material as a matter of fact and degree.

The judgment establishes the importance of examining the actual circumstances of the individual case. For this application, the relevant factual characteristics include the single-child occupancy, the small number of carers, the domestic use of shared facilities, the absence of external alterations and the limited pattern of comings and goings.

No comparator decision automatically determines the outcome at Whitefield Drive. Relevant authorities support an assessment based on the specific scale, character and effects of the proposal at 221A Whitefield Drive.

17. Relevant Comparable Appeal Decisions

A number of appeal decisions involving children's homes in existing dwellings are relevant comparator material when considering the planning characteristics of the proposal at 221A Whitefield Drive:

- APP/C5690/X/22/3299351 – 9 Whitburn Road, London SE13 7UQ: certificate of lawfulness relating to use of a dwellinghouse as a children's home, allowed on appeal on 27 January 2023.
- APP/M4320/X/22/3300633 – 9 Winstanley Road, Waterloo, Liverpool L22 4QN: certificate of lawfulness relating to a change from C3 to a children's home, allowed on appeal on 13 December 2022.
- APP/C4235/W/17/3173975 – 604 Didsbury Road, Heaton Mersey, Stockport SK4 3AG: comparator children's-home appeal.
- APP/E2205/X/16/3161037 – The Cottage, Stonebridge Green Road, Egerton, Ashford TN27 9AP: comparator certificate-of-lawfulness appeal.
- APP/C4235/A/11/2162636 – 73 The Crescent, Davenport, Stockport SK3 8SL: comparator full-planning appeal.

Each appeal turns on its own facts. Relevant common planning themes include the use of an existing dwelling for children in care, the ability of the dwelling to accommodate a family household, limited staffing and vehicle movements, and whether the resulting activity is materially different from ordinary residential occupation.

18. Design and Access Considerations

Amount: the proposal is a change of use of the existing building. No additional floorspace is proposed.

Layout: the existing domestic layout is retained. The submitted plan shows the ground floor as communal domestic accommodation and the first floor containing three rooms, bathroom and landing.

Scale: the physical scale of the property is unchanged.

Appearance: there is no proposed change to the external residential appearance.

Access: existing pedestrian and vehicular access arrangements are retained.

Parking: existing on-site parking is available via the driveway.

19. Neighbour and Community Impact

The applicant intends to operate the home transparently and professionally. The existing supporting statement commits to clear communication with neighbours where appropriate, provision of management contact details, prompt response to issues and operation within the applicable regulatory framework.

The most important controls on neighbour impact are inherent in the proposal itself: only one child, no more than two carers on duty, no enlargement or external alteration, a domestic layout, limited professional visits and managed shift arrangements.

These factors substantially limit the intensity of the use and support the conclusion that the home can operate without unacceptable harm to neighbouring amenity.

20. Planning Balance

The proposal provides a clear social benefit by creating a small, regulated residential care setting for one child. Against that benefit, the potential land-use effects are limited by the very small scale of occupation and the retention of the existing dwelling without external alteration.

The evidence supplied indicates modest traffic generation, on-site parking, a managed staffing rota, soundproofing measures and professional safeguarding and management arrangements. The property would continue to look and function as a home.

Accordingly, the characteristics of the proposal weigh in favour of approval, subject to the Local Planning Authority's assessment of the applicable Knowsley development-plan policies and any appropriate planning conditions.

21. Summary and Conclusions

The proposed use of 221A Whitefield Drive is for a maximum of one child aged 7–17 receiving 24-hour care from up to two carers on duty at any one time.

The proposal would retain the existing residential building, layout, access and external appearance. No extension or external alteration is proposed. The day-to-day activities would be domestic in character and the staffing model is deliberately limited.

The likely comings and goings, parking demand and general activity would remain modest. The applicant has also identified soundproofing, safeguarding, management and neighbour-engagement measures intended to protect amenity.

The North Devon judgment and relevant comparator appeals demonstrate that the materiality and effects of a children's-home use must be assessed on the particular facts and degree of each case. The specific facts at 221A Whitefield Drive point to a very small, domestic care setting.

For these reasons, it is respectfully requested that Knowsley Council approve the proposed change of use from Use Class C3 to Use Class C2, enabling the applicant to progress the separate Ofsted registration process.

Appendix A – Key Operational Parameters

Matter	221A Whitefield Drive
Use	C2 residential children's home
Resident	Maximum one child
Age range	7–17 years
Care	24-hour care and supervision
Staff	Up to two carers on duty at any time
Rota	Two care staff 8:00 a.m.–10:00 p.m.; sleeping-in staff overnight
Estimated staff-related traffic	Limited to planned staff attendance, handovers and occasional management/professional visits
Ground floor	Approx. 38.1 m ² / 410.3 ft ²
First floor	Approx. 32.9 m ² / 354.6 ft ²
Total area	Approx. 71.1 m ² / 764.9 ft ²
External alterations	None proposed
Internal structural alterations	None proposed
Parking	Existing on-site driveway parking
Manager	Normally 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.; not permanently based at the home
Social worker visits	Approximately monthly
Professional meetings	Weekly meetings may take place via Microsoft Teams

Appendix B – Documents Used to Prepare this Statement

- Planning and operational information supplied for 221A Whitefield Drive, Kirkby, Knowsley, L32 0RB.
- Existing combined C2 Planning Statement for 221A Whitefield Drive.
- Submitted ground- and first-floor layout image for 221A Whitefield Drive.