

APPLICATION NO: 25/00452/COU

CASE OFFICER: Andrew Hunt

WARD: Halewood South

PARISH: Halewood
Town Council

LOCATION: 1 The Cottages, Greensbridge Lane, Halewood, Knowsley, L26 6LE

PROPOSAL: CHANGE OF USE FROM RESIDENTIAL DWELLING (USE CLASS C3) TO A CHILDREN'S HOME FOR UP TO 2 CHILDREN (USE CLASS C2).

Site Description

The application site is an irregular shaped site located on Greensbridge Lane, Halewood and comprises an end terrace dwelling. There is a parking space to the rear with access to the side. There are dwellings to the north and south with a grassed area to the north west. There is a row of shops to the south east with a new housing estate to the north east and older housing directly to the east.

The surrounding area is mostly residential in nature with a small local centre to the south east. There is access to the area via Greensbridge Lane to the east. There is a bus stop 450 metres away from the site to the south (6 Minutes away on foot).

Proposal

This application proposes the change of use from the existing residential dwelling (Use Class C3) to form a children's care home (Class C2). The care home would be for up to 2 children and there would be 2 care staff. Each young person would be supported on a 2:1 daytime staffing ratio, consisting of one day-shift staff member and one staff member providing 24-hour cover including a sleep-in. The care home would be for children with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD). Details beyond this have not been supplied, despite requests to complete a proforma and the precise staff rota is not able to be ascertained.

There are no proposed external changes to the building with only minor small scale internal alterations.

Consultations

Environmental Health (Knowsley Council) – No objection.

Local Highway Authority (Knowsley Council) – No objection subject to a cycle parking condition.

Commissioning (Knowsley Council) – The provider has not been in touch with

commissioning to discuss our sufficiency needs or indicate how they intend to work with the council to meet the needs of our children. Currently there are over 90 beds in Knowsley, which is an over sufficiency of 2:1. We do not need any further EBD beds in the area. There is no indication that the home intends to be registered with Ofsted. I also note that they are looking at 2 children with a staffing ratio of 2:2 which would mean 4 adults in the home at any one time.

Merseyside Police Architectural Liaison Officer – Objection; the proposal would undermine the safety and security of existing residents and future residents. Greensbridge Lane has been operating whilst unregulated and without planning permission. The Cottages has previously been a high-demand generator with 32 calls for service and 7 crimes recorded since September 2023.

Representations

The application was publicised by letters sent to 7 neighbouring properties and by a site notice.

Four objections were received to the consultation and the points of objection are summarised below:

- There was anti-social behaviour previously at the premises involving children and the police were called.
- Concerned about anti-social behaviour from unruly children.
- Concerned about loss of property value.
- The property is not suitable for a children's home.
- There is inadequate parking for support staff, there has been parking problems.

Planning History

N/A

Relevant Policy

Paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that planning decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or where the development plan is absent, silent or out of date planning permission should be granted unless the application of policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole.

Paragraph 12 of the NPPF clarifies that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. Where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan, permission should not normally be granted. Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan, but

only if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed.

The development plan in Knowsley comprises the Saved Policies of the Replacement Unitary Development Plan, the Core Strategy Local Plan and the Joint Waste Local Plan. The following policies are relevant to the determination of this application.

KNOWSLEY LOCAL PLAN: CORE STRATEGY

CS2 - Development Principles

CS7 - Transport Networks

CS16 - Specialist and Supported Accommodation

CS19 - Design Quality and Accessibility in New Development

SAVED POLICIES - KNOWSLEY REPLACEMENT UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN (ADOPTED JUNE 2006)

H5 - Development within Primarily Residential Areas

ENV2 - Noise and Vibration

Article 35 Statement

The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by identifying matters of concern with the proposal and determining the application within a timely manner, clearly setting out the reason for refusal, allowing the applicant the opportunity to consider the harm caused and whether or not it can be remedied by a revision to the proposal. The Local Planning Authority is willing to meet with the applicant to discuss the best course of action and is also willing to provide pre-application advice in respect of any future application for a revised development.

Assessment

Principle of Development - Policy

Paragraph 61 of the NPPF states that the overall aim should be to meet an area's identified housing need including an appropriate mix of housing types for the local community. When establishing need the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed. Groups should include looked after children, and evidence of this need can be found in the local authority's sufficiency strategy.

Paragraph 96 in NPPF states that *"Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which:*

a) promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other – for example through mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres, street layouts that allow for easy pedestrian and cycle connections within and between neighbourhoods, and

active street frontages;

b) are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion – for example through the use of well-designed, clear and legible pedestrian and cycle routes, and high quality public space, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas;”

Paragraph 135 in NPPF states *“Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:*

a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;

b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;

c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);

f) 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.”

Part 2 of Core Strategy Policy CS10 States that *“development proposals will be required to:*

a) Avoid unacceptable impacts on existing residents, business occupiers, and future occupiers;

b) Minimise crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour, including good levels of natural surveillance and security; and

c) Accommodate future maintenance and long term management requirements”.

Core Strategy Policy CS16 states that the Council will provide or support the provision of new specialist and supported residential accommodation, *“which will be located in an appropriate environment, near to highways and public transport links and local amenities”*

Part 2 of Core Strategy Policy CS19 states that , development proposals will be required to:

“a) Avoid unacceptable impacts on existing residents, business occupiers, and future occupiers;

b) Minimise crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour, including good levels of natural surveillance and security; and

c) Accommodate future maintenance and long term management requirements”.

Replacement UDP Saved Policy H5 (Development Within Primarily Residential Areas) states that: new development within the Primarily Residential Areas which is for uses appropriate to a residential area will be permitted provided that the development would not:

- Have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers by reason of noise, disturbance, overlooking, visual intrusion smells, fumes, on-street parking or

other causes; or

- Adversely affect the character or street scene of the area.

Replacement UDP Saved Policy H7 (Provision of flats, nursing and residential homes, hostels and houses in multiple occupation (HMO's)) states that proposals for residential homes, will be permitted provided that:

- "a) There would be no unacceptable increase in the level of noise or disturbance, or loss of privacy, for occupiers of neighbouring property;*
- b) Any necessary vehicle parking areas would be adequate to meet the needs of the development, safe and screened and/or landscaped so as to avoid causing loss of visual amenity in the area;*
- c) Bin stores, fire escapes and clothes drying areas would be adequately screened or designed so as to avoid causing loss of visual amenity;*
- d) In the case of proposals to convert existing property, the property would be suitable in terms of its size and character to accommodate the development proposed; and*
- e) In the case of proposals for nursing or residential homes, hostels or Houses in Multiple Occupation, the proposals would not result in:*
 - An existing dwelling having a nursing home, residential home, hostel or HMO on both sides; or*
 - More than 2 adjoining properties being used as a nursing home, residential home, hostel or HMO".*

Suitability as a children's home – Assessment

Crime and Anti Social Behaviour

The site previously in the past 1-2 years has operated as a children's home without planning permission. Merseyside Police advised that The Cottages has previously been a high-demand generator with 32 calls for service and 7 crimes recorded since September 2023.

The area is a frequent generator for anti-social behaviour and crime which is reflected in the accounts from other teams within the police force and violence and anti-social behaviour figures. There is a concern that a children's home at this location would be negatively impacted by current local issues.

The surrounding area is an area of high criminality and anti social behaviour. Within the area, there is limited access to health and education, with facilities being oversubscribed.

There are additional unregulated care home placements in proximity to The Cottages which are also high demand generators.

This is in a locality of high crime, ASB and organised crime. Merseyside Police vehemently object to the proposal to change the use of this residential property into a home for looked after children due to the threat, harm and risk surrounding any vulnerable children being exploited by unscrupulous criminals in that location.

Taking account of the above local crime rates, the location, as well as the previous operation of the site, it is considered that the proposal would create a significant risk of crime and anti-social behaviour to both the children in care and neighbouring residents.

The proposal would therefore be contrary to (Part 2 b) of Core Strategy Policy CS19 and NPPF para 135 as it would fail to minimise crime and anti social behaviour and would undermine community cohesion.

Residential Amenity

In order for the proposal to be acceptable, it is important that it does not have a detrimental impact on the amenities of existing residents. Core Strategy Policies CS2 and CS19 combine to ensure that new development does not significantly injure the amenities of nearby residential neighbours. Saved Policy ENV2 of the Knowsley UDP seeks to ensure that new or existing developments are protected from new or existing noise sources and that, where necessary, effective mitigation measures are secured.

The care home would be for up to 2 children and there would be 2 care staff. Each young person would be supported on a 2:1 daytime staffing ratio, consisting of one day-shift staff member and one staff member providing 24-hour cover including a sleep-in. The care home would be for children with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD). Details beyond this have not been supplied, despite requests to complete a proforma and the precise staff rota is not able to be ascertained.

There would be some noise associated with comings and goings from the property in the form of car doors opening and closing, and the noise of engines. However, such noises would be relatively infrequent and would not take place late at night or early in the morning. This level of coming and goings would not be significantly greater than that associated with a family home (which could accommodate more residents than the proposed use and have similar numbers of visitors to them).

The level of activity likely to occur as a result of a general C2 use would therefore not result in significant harm to residential amenity. This is supported by the views of the council's Environmental Health team who have no objection to the proposal.

A general C2 use would therefore normally be considered acceptable at the property. However, due to the particular crime and anti social behaviour issues identified above, the proposal would result in a high risk of anti social behaviour and crime which would result in significant harm to the amenity of neighbours through crime, anti social behaviour, noise and disturbance.

Overall, it is considered that the proposals would cause significant harm to amenity and the application is contrary to Core Strategy Policy CS19 and UDP Policy ENV2.

Highways

NPPF Paragraph 116 sets out that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual

cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe taking into account all reasonable future scenarios.

Core Strategy Policy CS7 (Transport Networks) states that new development will be required to be:

- Located and designed to prioritise accessibility and sustainable modes of travel through a choice of walking, cycling, public transport, and incorporate access for private vehicles.
- In compliance with adopted cycle, car, disabled and service vehicle parking standards for different types and scales of new development.

The site is located within a sustainable location with excellent bus links. There is a bus stop situated just a 6 minute walk away on Baileys Lane.

There would be no change in proposed parking spaces at the site. There is no dedicated parking spaces at the dwelling, however there is sufficient spaces for at least 1 car space at the rear of the building within the site boundary. There is also the ability to park informally on Lower Close and 2 public parking spaces on Baileys Lane to the south.

Overall, the level of parking is considered sufficient parking (when combined with on street parking and the site's excellent public transport links), to ensure that there would not be significant harm to highway safety from the proposal.

Overall, the proposal will not lead to unacceptable impacts on highway safety. Therefore, the application is consistent with NPPF para 116, and Policy CS7 of the Local Plan Core Strategy.

Other Considerations

In relation to potential impacts on property prices, this is not a material planning consideration.

Conclusion

The principle of the development is considered unacceptable as the proposed care home would fail to ensure the protection of the vulnerable occupants of the home from crime and anti social behaviour due to the location of the site in a high crime risk area with a history of recorded crime. The proposal would also expose neighbouring residents to an unacceptable risk of crime and anti-social behaviour to the detriment of their amenity.

The development is therefore contrary to the Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Recommendation

Refusal

That planning permission be refused for the following reasons:

- 1) The proposed care home would fail to ensure the protection of the vulnerable occupants of the home from crime and anti social behaviour. The proposal would also expose neighbouring residents to an unacceptable risk of crime and anti-social behaviour. The proposal is therefore contrary to Core Strategy Policy CS19, and the NPPF, which seek to minimise both crime and fear of crime and maintain community cohesion.

Signed Case Officer¹: **Andrew Hunt**

Signed Authorising **Jo Sheridan**
Officer²: _____

25/02/2026
Date: _____

Informatives

N/A

1 I confirm that I do not have a personal relationship with the applicant, agent or other interested parties; I also confirm that I do not have a financial interest in the site or the development proposed

2 I confirm that I do not have a personal relationship with the applicant, agent or other interested parties; I also confirm that I do not have a financial interest in the site or the development proposed