

Knowsley Council
Regeneration and Economic Development Directorate.
Delegated Planning Report

APPLICATION NO: 25/00284/COU

CASE OFFICER: Andrew Hunt

WARD: St Gabriels

PARISH: Tarbock
Parish Council

LOCATION: Sandy Meadows (The Lodge, 1, 2, And Apartments 1A & 2A Sandy Meadows), Wheathill Road, Huyton, Knowsley, L36 5UT

PROPOSAL: CHANGE OF USE FROM 3NO. DWELLINGS & 2 SELF CONTAINED APARTMENTS (USE CLASS C3) TO A CHILDREN AND ADULT CARE FACILITY FOR A MAXIMUM OF 12NO. PERSONS

Site Description

The application site is a long irregular shaped plot consisting of a detached dwelling at the front of the site with three dwellings formed in a semi circular shape in the middle of the site. There are 3 dwellings and 2 self contained apartments. In addition to the buildings, the site consists of mostly grassed areas with hardstanding and trees.

There are other dwellings to the north west and east of the site with a wooded area and motorway embankment to the south. Access to the site is from the west via Wheathill Road.

Proposal

This application relates to a change of use from 3 no dwellings and 2 self contained apartments (use class C3) to a children and adult care facility for a maximum of 12 persons. There would be 6 staff on site working on a shift with handover at 8am. No physical alterations would take place on the site.

Consultations

Children's Services (Knowsley Council) – From a children's perspective we would never consider placing children in such a large (12 bed) establishment this does not fit what is considered to be best practice for children. We would always expect Children's homes to be registered with Ofsted or to be in the process of doing so. The document provided does not make any reference to this. I would not be supportive of a 12 bed residential provision – it is also not clear if they intend to provide mixed provision of adult care and children's care this is also not evidence of good practice and not something we would support.

Community Safety (Knowsley Council) – A potential issue is the "clustering" of these homes whilst we endorse registered residential social care in our communities this would potentially bring integration and community cohesion issues. As a service we have previously submitted our objections to this type of "clustering".

Commissioning (Knowsley Council) – The ages and needs of the persons cared for is unknown. If they are only going for CQC registration and have under 18s then we would not support the application.

Environmental Health & Consumer Protection (Knowsley Council) – No objection.

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

Merseyside Police Architectural Liason Officer - The area is a frequent generator for anti-social behaviour and organised crime. There is a concern that a children's home at this location would be negatively impacted by current local issues. There is a risk that children housed at this location, could become influenced by offenders residing in immediate proximity and subsequently be drawn into a criminal activity. Based on the above risk, I would not be satisfied in allowing children to be housed at this location and formally place an objection on behalf of Merseyside Police.

Representations

The application was publicised by letters sent to 10 neighbouring properties and by site notice. There were 2 objections received to the application consisting of the following main points.

- Noise and disturbance impact on neighbours.
- Safety implications are unknown as there is no detail of the care the property will offer and the status of the people living there.
- There are a lot of children over looking and over looked by this property which poses a high risk.
- Lack of security as there is no fence and there is open access between our property and the application properties. A fence should be constructed.
- Increase in vehicles parked and vehicles entering and existing the site, there should be sufficient spaces within the site and no on street parking.
- The site should be like a family friendly dwelling.

The material points of objection are addressed later in the report.

Planning History

Whole Site

74/09762/HIST - PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT – granted – 06.11.1986

74/15197/HIST - ERECTION OF TWO STOREY DETACHED DWELLINGS INCLUDING DOUBLE GARAGE PARKING AREA NEW ACCESS AND LANDSCAPING – granted - 05.06.1989

Far eastern part of site

18/00519/OUT - OUTLINE PLANNING PERMISSION FOR THE ERECTION OF 1 NO DETACHED DWELLING - APPROVAL SOUGHT FOR ACCESS, LAYOUT, AND SCALE, APPEARANCE AND LANDSCAPING RESERVED FOR FUTURE APPROVAL - granted - 16.11.2018

20/00658/REM - APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF RESERVED MATTERS PURSUANT TO OUTLINE PLANNING PERMISSION 18/00519/OUT (ERECTION OF 1 NO. DETACHED DWELLING) - APPROVAL SOUGHT FOR LANDSCAPING AND APPEARANCE (ACCESS, LAYOUT, AND SCALE APPROVED AT OUTLINE STAGE) – granted - 12.04.2021

22/00092/OUT - OUTLINE APPLICATION FOR THE ERECTION OF ONE DWELLING (LANDSCAPING RESERVED) - granted - 20.07.2022

25/00390/REM - RESERVED MATTERS APPLICATION PURSUANT TO OUTLINE PERMISSION 22/00092/OUT - APPROVAL SOUGHT FOR LANDSCAPING –

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

H7 - Provision of flats, nursing and residential homes, hostels and houses in multiple occupation (HMO's)

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

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"*

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”.*

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.”*

Suitability as a children's home – Assessment

i. Number of persons

The Council's 'Knowsley Children's Social Care Sufficiency Position Statement 2022 – 2025' sets out that there is a particular demand for children with complex mental health or emotional difficulties, along with challenging behaviours, who require a

setting where there is an opportunity to receive individual care in a small provision (my emphasis added). Additionally, the Council's Children's Regulatory Services team have confirmed there is currently no significant demand for children's residential placement within the borough, with the priority of searches being for Foster Care, or for residential placements that can cater for multiple and complex behaviours, in small residential homes. The largest need is for care homes in typical residential units for 1 and 2 children, as this will most closely resemble a typical family environment.

Knowsley would only place children in residential provision which does not draw attention to the child as being 'different' to their peers. Good residential provision are 'family' based homes in the heart of the community to allow children to interact with their peers as every other child would do. In time the set up of the application site will soon be seen as the 'close' in Huyton where all the children in care live – this does not fit with Knowsley's expectations that providers enable cared for children to integrate effectively in their community.

Given the number of placements in close proximity in the one cul-de-sac raises concerns about the effective 'matching' of children who are able to live together. As you increase the numbers of children effective and safe matching becomes more of a challenge and can raise significant risk situations.

The staffing demands on such large establishment would have enhanced risks of instability for the children and also variable skills/levels of expertise in the staff group – this is a common challenge in the childcare sector and would be exacerbated by such a large provision.

The proposed 12no. bedroom adults and children's home is, therefore, deemed to be too large in its size and type and would fail to address current specialist accommodation needs. This view is supported by children's services who view the scheme as too large to fit in with best practise for children.

Overall, the use of the site as a care home for 12 persons is considered to be too large to provide an appropriate, caring and nurturing family environment for the children concerned and would be contrary to the identified need for specialist accommodation and the best interests of the children, to the detriment of their wellbeing.

The site would resemble an old style children's institution and would not fit the expectations of Knowsley Council that providers enable cared for children to integrate effectively into the community and effective and safe matching of children becomes more of a challenge as numbers increase and can raise significant risk situations. The proposed development would not meet any local need for children's care home provision in Knowsley.

ii Mix of Adults and Children

In addition to the size of the development, the mixing of adults and children within the site is highly unorthodox and unusual, with no other similar examples in the local

area of such an arrangement being approved. The presence of children and non carer adults in the same large complex raises the potential for safeguarding issues and is not good practice. It also makes it impossible to tailor the residential environment specifically to suit the needs of children. It would also make the site less like a typical family residential environment, moving away from best practise and the best interests of the children.

In certain circumstances a big difference in the age of residents can be an additional risk factor and the younger residents may look up to the older resident and imitate their behaviour which may not always be appropriate or suitable for their age – there have been occasion where younger children who have been classed as low risk have been significantly influenced by older peers/residents and as a result their risk has increased due to poor matching. The other aspect is if an older child is placed with much younger child they may feel isolated and may not feel that they belong – In turn this could lead to placement breakdown, isolation, and increased vulnerability.

This is supported by the council's children service who object to the presence of children and adults together in the same site and state this is not good practise and not something they would ever support. Merseyside Police also raise concerns in relation to the mixing of adults and children.

Overall, the mixture of adults and children is considered inappropriate and contrary to best practise and the welfare of the children.

iii *Crime and Anti Social Behaviour*

The surrounding area is an area of high criminality and anti social behaviour and the location is in proximity to fast roads and easily accessible travel routes (M62 and Huyton Bus Station) which exacerbates risk. The motorway is directly to the south whilst there is a bus stop just 1 minutes walk away from the site on Wheathill Road. Bus stops are an area in which people congregate and on occasion incidents of ASB have been linked to bus stops. With the bus stop being in such short distance of the placement it would be a concern that the residents could be vulnerable to ASB, and they could also be more susceptible to making inappropriate peer associations.

The area is a frequent generator for anti-social behaviour and organised crime. There is a concern that a children's home at this location would be negatively impacted by current local issues. There is a risk that children housed at this location, could become influenced by offenders residing in immediate proximity and subsequently be drawn into a criminal activity.

A similar type of home operated at 5 The Old School, Brickwall Lane, L29. This site has previously been a demand generator for policing resources.

There is a concern that multiple children's homes at this location would be negatively impacted by current local issues. There is a risk that children housed at this location, could become influenced by offenders residing in immediate proximity and subsequently be drawn into a criminal activity. Based on the above risk, Merseyside Police would not be satisfied in allowing children to be housed in this manner at this location.

Taking account of the above local crime rates, the location, as well as the substantial size and type of the proposed children's home, this would present further significant safeguarding concerns for up to 12no. vulnerable persons who would occupy the home. Overall, the proposal would put the vulnerable occupants of the care home (both children and adults) at risk of crime and anti social behaviour.

Residential Amenity

Core Strategy Policy CS19 (Design Quality and Accessibility in New Development) states that development proposals will be required to avoid unacceptable impacts on existing residents, business occupiers, and future occupiers.

Part e of UDP policy H7 states that an existing dwelling should not have a residential home on both sides.

"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"

Existing Residents

In relation to residential amenity, there would be no built development on site merely a change of use, therefore, there would be no impacts on neighbour amenity through loss of light/outlook.

In terms of privacy it is noted that there is no fence with the house to the north. However, there is a large hedge along the boundary that provides acceptable levels of Privacy. There would likely not be sufficient space within the site for a fence due to the presence of a road but there is the potential for the neighbour to erect a fence for privacy if they wished.

In relation to noise and disturbance from the proposed use, there would not be significant noise impacts on neighbours from the proposed care home. This is supported by the views of the council's Environmental Health team.

Future Occupiers

There is a dwelling approved at the eastern part of the site under (22/00092/OUT). This would be located at the far eastern part of the site and the only route out of the site either on foot or by car would be to the west (past the care home). This dwelling would be functionally part of the wider site and would make the site a mixed use care home/ single residential dwelling. There would be care homes to the north west and west of the dwelling.

This dwelling would be a cul de sac building effectively be surrounded by care homes to the west with 4 buildings within the site exclusively used for care homes. They would not be able

to enter or exit the site without going back several care home building. The presence of 12 looked after persons contained within 4 buildings would mean that the occupiers of this building would be surrounded and enclosed by care homes. All 4 nearest properties would be care homes. The amount of care homes next to the dwelling is considered to be excessive and detrimental to the amenity of future occupiers of the building.

Highways

NPPF para 115 states that in assessing sites that may be allocated for development in plans, or specific applications for development, it should be ensured that:

b) safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users;

NPPF Paragraph 116 states 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, following mitigation, 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 proposal includes several parking spaces within the site with potential for parking around the mini roundabout with a minimum of 7 spaces without blocking the access road. This is considered to be sufficient to meet the parking needs of the property. The property also has good transport links to the wider area with a bus stop opposite. The existing access arrangement would be unaffected. Overall, there would be no harm to highway safety from the proposal subject to a condition to secure cycle parking. This view is supported by the council's highways department who have no objection subject to cycle parking. The proposal complies with NPPF para 116 and Core Strategy Policy CS7.

Conclusion

The principle of the development is considered unacceptable as the proposed care home for up to 12 persons, is deemed to be of a mixture, size and type that would not offer a size or type of residential facility which would align with current health and social care service requirements, nor would it meet current specialist housing needs and demands for small children's homes within the borough. The proposal would also fail to ensure the protection of the vulnerable occupants of the home from crime and anti social behaviour or provide an appropriate nurturing family environment to the detriment of the occupiers of the buildings.

The development is therefore contrary to the Core Strategy and Unitary Development Plan, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Recommendation

Refusal

That Planning Permission be refused for the following reasons:

- 1) The proposed development would fail to align with current health and social care service requirements, and specialist housing needs. Furthermore, the style and nature of the proposed care home would not enable cared for children to integrate effectively in their community and raises concerns in respect of safeguarding and the effective matching of children and young people leading to challenges and significant risk situations. The format of the care home would result in safeguarding concerns due to its size, scale and proximity to transport links and areas of anti social behaviour. The proposal is therefore contrary to Core Strategy Policy CS16, UDP Policies H5 and H7 and the NPPF.

Signed Case Officer¹: **Andrew Hunt**

Signed Authorising
Officer²: **Alan Kilroe**

Date: **15 August 2025**

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