



DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Application to change the use of a elderly person's residential home (C2), to a children's home (C2).

**ALSTON LODGE,
LOWER LANE,
LONGRIDGE,
LANCASHIRE,
PR3 2YH**

23/02/2025



1. Background

- 1.1. I am writing on behalf of my client, Lisa Emam of Associated Wellbeing, who is seeking planning permission to use Alston Lodge, a C2 use, as a small specialist care home for up to five children, who will either have been diagnosed with learning disabilities (LD) and/or emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, (EBD) to be looked after by five carers (working on a rota basis) and a manager, which falls within use class C2 of the Use Classes Order.
- 1.2. As both the existing and proposed use fall within Use Class C2 (residential institutions), a lawful development application was submitted to establish that the change of use did not require planning consent. (3/2025/0054).
- 1.3. However, it was not realised that the original consent for the elderly person's home (3/86/0236/P) included a condition preventing a change of use within Use Class C2 to any other use without consent.
- 1.4. The last use of the property was for the Alston Lodge Residential Home Limited, a care home that was providing personal care and accommodation for up to 16 people, some who may be living with dementia, physical or mental health needs.
- 1.5. There could be up to 16 members of staff and a Manager/Deputy on the premises at any one time, along with regular visits from family and friends.

1.6. In comparison, the proposed children's home will only accommodate five children, with a maximum of seven staff (5 carers and a manager and deputy). Details of other visitors are outlined below.

2. The Proposal

2.1. The property is a sixteen bedroomed elderly care home, with six off street parking spaces, an electrical charging point and a bicycle rack. No external changes are proposed.

2.2. The home will be registered with Ofsted as a five bedroomed children's home. Children will undergo a stringent impact risk assessment to ensure they integrate with the local community. This considers the home, the environment, the community, plus peer groups and risk assesses against each child as an individual prior to admission into the home. The children will live at the property long term, hopefully for many years. This is not a halfway house or emergency housing for children.

2.3. The company has a close working relationships with Lancashire Social Services.

2.4. No internal alterations are proposed as the rooms and space standards meet the requirements of the Care Quality Commission. Prior to the registration of the home, OFSTED would be the organisation responsible for ensuring these standards have been met.

2.5. The intention is to register the home for five children (7 until their 18th birthdays), with learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural needs. It will, through OFSTED, have a stringent impact risk assessment to



ensure it will integrate with the local community. This assessment will consider the home, the environment, the community, plus peer groups, as well as assesses the child as an individual prior to admission into the home. The child will live at the property long term, hopefully for many years. This is not a halfway house or emergency housing for children.

2.6. In a ministerial statement from Rachel Maclean (Minister of State, Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities) in May 2023 she stated: *'The planning system should not be a barrier to providing homes for the most vulnerable children in society. When care is the best choice for a child, it is important that the care system provides stable, loving homes close to children's communities. These need to be the right homes, in the right places with access to good schools and community support. It is not acceptable that some children are living far from where they would call home (without a clear child protection reason for this), separated from the people they know and love'.*

2.7. *Local planning authorities should give due weight to and be supportive of applications, where appropriate, for all types of accommodation for looked after children in their area that reflect local needs and all parties in the development process should work together closely to facilitate the timely delivery of such vital accommodation for children across the country. It is important that prospective applicants talk to local planning authorities about whether their service is needed in that locality, using the location assessment (a regulatory requirement and part of the Ofsted registration process set out in paragraph 15.1 of the Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations) to demonstrate this.*

2.8. Under Section 22G of the Children Act 1989, local authorities have a statutory responsibility to take steps, as reasonably practicable, that ensure children in care are provided with accommodation that '(a) is within the authority's area; and (b) meets the needs of those children.' Three reports were published in 2020 by the Children's Commissioner: 'Children who no-one knows what to do with; Private provision in children's social care' and 'Stability index 2020', which point out the failings of local government to meet this responsibility.

2.9. The papers summarise the findings of three years of work by the Children's Commissioner's Office and explain the failure of both national and local government to adequately meet the needs of these children. The report (page 15) states: *'Local authorities are highly reliant on the independent sector, particularly for children's residential care. Costs are increasing but it's unclear why. Given this reliance, it is imperative the market works well and that commissioning and procurement are improved to ensure no child is placed in unsuitable care settings. Recommendations: The Government should consider the barriers to creating more residential care placements to increase supply'*.

2.10. The proposed children's home seeks to replicate as closely as possible a normal family environment. This type of provision, which government policy is promoting, is to help children who often, through no fault of their own, have not had good parenting in their early years.

2.11. Under the requirements of OFSTED, such care homes must be run as closely as possible to a typical family household, while accepting staff are employed on a rota basis to provide the parental support to the



children so many have missed in their early years. The only physical requirements specified by OFSTED are security cameras (although not essential and not materially different from a system found in many households), emergency lighting (no external visual distinction from normal lighting) and locks on bedroom doors for the privacy of each child (not a material issue for planning).

2.12. The application is to ensure that the property acquired will meet the necessary planning requirements to achieve OFSTED registration.

2.13. It is the company policy to encourage staff to use public transport (by offering free bus passes or subsidised taxi fares) or cycle to work(with the provision of a secure bicycle rack) and not to allow on street parking.

2.14. For those who need to drive, the six off-street parking spaces will accommodate all staff and visitors, ensuring that there will be no impact on street parking in the area. Staff shifts are staggered to minimize traffic congestion during peak hours."

2.15. Five children would live at the house, with two carers working on a rota basis sleeping overnight. They would work on 48 -hour shifts, with one change of these staff each day around 8.30am. Each day, three daily carers will arrive around 8.30am and work until 6.30pm. A manager or a deputy would arrive each weekday around 9am and work until around 5pm.

2.16. These comings and goings are set out in the table below.



- 2.17. The purpose of the home would be to support the children to build their confidence, help them in developing life skills and prepare for an adult life outside of an institution. This type of support has been found to be most effective in helping these children to have normal lives and not experience problems in later life.
- 2.18. During the day it is expected that the child would engage in various activities, plus attend a mainstream or special school. In some cases, the child may receive some home schooling but only while he/she settles in. Clearly this is no different from a family choosing to have home tutoring.
- 2.19. With regard to schooling, it is often the case that when young people come into care, they have missed an extensive proportion of their education or are affected in a way that they could not work effectively in a large classroom environment. Given this, they would be tutored from home initially. This is all achieved online without any tutors having to go to the house. They may then progress to a specialist unit (smaller class sizes) then hopefully onto mainstream. In cases where parents of children in an ordinary family choose to have their children educated at home, it makes no difference to the planning status of the use.
- 2.20. The children's home model is to create a warm and nurturing family style environment for the medium to long-term care of a small number of children. This type of provision is operated in the same manner as a regular family home with two primary carers, to provide consistency and stability to the children who live there (similar to a fostering model).
- 2.21. Care is provided in small sized family units where residential carers help to develop the social and life skills needed when the children no

longer live within an institution. Without such homes and positive interventions, these children when they leave the controlled environment of care homes will often end up in adult institutions, suffering from long term health problems.

3. Planning Assessment

3.1. The planning policy framework is provided by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF December 2024) and the Ribble Valley Core Strategy.

3.2. The relevant sections of the NPPF are as follows:

Paragraph 2 of the NPPF is highly relevant as it states that applications for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Paragraph 61 makes clear that in order to '*support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes.....the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed*'. Paragraph 63 makes particular mention of the needs of looked after children.

Paragraph 62 makes clear how housing need in an area should be assessed and understood, and paragraph 63 advocates that planning policies should reflect the housing needs for different groups in the community.

3.3. Recent Government advice emphasises the provision set out in Paragraph 63 of the NPPF, which notes that local planning authorities



should assess the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community and reflects this in planning policies and decisions. Paragraph 63 states: *‘These groups should include (but are not limited to) those who require affordable housing (including Social Rent); families with children; looked after children.’* Evidence of need for looked after children can be found in the relevant local authority’s Children’s Social Care Sufficiency Strategy.

- 3.4. In a ministerial statement the then Housing and Planning Minister said councils *should consider whether it is appropriate to include accommodation for children in need of social services as part of the NPPF assessment’*. She went on to say that *‘Local planning authorities should give due weight to and be supportive of applications, where appropriate, for all types of accommodation for looked after children in their area that reflect local needs and all parties in the development process should work together closely to facilitate the timely delivery of such vital accommodation for children across the country’*.
- 3.5. Paragraph 116 is specifically relevant, *‘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’*.
- 3.6. Section 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities emphasises the need to make appropriate provision for the special needs of young people.



Ribble Valley Core Strategy

Principle of Use

- 3.7. As the proposed use will remain residential in nature, the principle of the use in a residential area is not considered to be in conflict with the policy for the area.

Location of Specialist Housing

- 3.8. OFSTED will require a local risk assessment before approving the property as a care home. Planning is therefore not the only form of regulation which controls the suitability of the location. A basic principle in assessing a planning application is whether there is other legislation which is more appropriate to regulate the proposed development. In the case of children's care homes, the relevant powers are set out in:
- Care Standards Act 2000

The Care Standards Act 2000 (Registration)(England) Regulations 2010

The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015

Children's Homes and Looked after Children (Miscellaneous
Amendments) (England) Regulations 2013

Neighbouring Amenity

- 3.9. It is not considered the comings and goings will have an adverse impact on the amenity of neighbours. It is considered the proposal, represents a less intensive use than the previous elderly care home.

3.10. Staff shift changes, school runs, and visitors will all follow a schedule similar to that of a large family with young children. Additionally, evidence from other similar care homes indicates that the level of comings and goings will not differ materially from a typical household and will certainly be less than the previous use.

3.11. A typical week at the home will include regular school runs, staff changes, and occasional social worker visits. These activities will follow a predictable schedule, and all efforts will be made to minimize traffic and disruption to the surrounding area.

3.12. The home manager and/ or would arrive each weekdays in the morning and leave each evening (9am and 5pm). In terms of the other staff on the premises, the overnight staff, they would work on 48 hour shifts with only one of the two staff changing each day around 9.30. Three daily carers would arrive each day around 8.30, working until 6.30pm.

Other Visitors

3.13. In addition to OFSTED's one visit per year, there will be visits by local social services circa every four to six weeks and one Regulation 44 each month. Usually, each child's social worker would visit them individually but if they are from the same local authority one of the social workers may visit both children.

3.14. Depending on the needs of the individual children, there may be occasional visits by other social workers. In addition, there may be visits by family members and friends, although these are carefully managed in



advance, subject to child's individual care plan. These visits are no more frequent than those to a typical family by friends or relatives.

3.15. An estimate of the average number of comings and goings in a week of the existing and proposed use are set out below.

3.16. All household chores such as cleaning, cooking and gardening involve the children and no additional staff are employed at the premises.

Schedule 1 (estimated comings and goings of previous use as an elderly person's home)

Activity	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Staff	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
Visitors	32	16	16	16	16	16	32
Total Movements (in and out)	64	48	48	48	48	48	64

Schedule of Proposed Use (based upon experience of other similar homes)

Activity	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Home Manager / Deputy		4	4	4	4	4	
Care workers starting and finishing shift	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
School run		4	4	4	4	4	
Shopping/ Social/recreational outings	4						4
Visitors	4			2			4
Total Movements (in and out)	16	16	16	18	16	16	8



- 3.17. The above schedule shows that the comings and goings would be less than the current use.

Impact of the presence of staff

- 3.18. Visually, the property would look no different to the adjacent houses. During the day there would normally be a maximum of five members of staff present at anyone time, but this would have no impact on the amenity or character of the area.

Fear of Crime

- 3.19. The fear of crime and anti-social behaviour is a material planning consideration which might weigh against the granting of planning permission. Given that this is a matter of planning merit and in the absence of any basis to conclude that crime and anti-social behaviour are an inherent part of the character of the proposed use such a fear is not relevant to the determination of this application.

- 3.20. The children who will live at the home will undergo a thorough impact risk assessment before admission to ensure they are well-suited to this environment. Professional carers, trained in managing emotional and behavioural needs, will provide 24-hour care and support. These measures will minimize the likelihood of any disturbance to neighbours.

- 3.21. There can be concern that the use would result in more noise and possibly anti-social behaviour due to the background of the



children. A response to such concern is contained in appeal decision (Appeal Ref. 2162636-):

11. *The fear of crime is a material consideration in the determination of the appeal. However, the weight that can be attributed to it depends on whether or not the evidence shows that the potential risk of crime is shown or expected to be high and the consequences for the community and individuals are serious. Whilst it is acknowledged that the incidents cited by the local residents would cause upset, they are not altogether unusual occurrences in modern society. Some of the incidents raised issues relating to the running of the home which have the potential to be overcome by changes to the management of the site. None of the evidence suggests that the potential risk from crime is shown or expected to be high or that the consequences for local residents are serious.*
12. *The evidence therefore leads me to conclude that the effect of the development on the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring dwellings regarding risk of crime would be low and carries insufficient weight to warrant dismissing the appeal on these grounds.*

3.22. The nature of the children is not therefore material to the determination of this application. In addition, the level of professional care would also act to minimise any likely disturbance.

3.23. The task must be to compare against that 'baseline' the character of the current land use with what is now proposed. In so many respects the use would operate in a way that is very similar to a normal family home. The property would provide the young person with their sole and main residence, with free and shared access to living, dining,



and kitchen facilities, an ability to take shared meals prepared for them or make their own food or drink.

- 3.24. The resident would interact with the property in a way that is very similar to an adult resident, parent or guardian. The resident and staff would eat together and carry out domestic chores. The home seeks to foster lifestyles identical to a normal family home.

Community Engagement

- 3.25. The applicant recognises the importance of integrating the proposed children's home into the local community and will actively engage with neighbours through an information session prior to opening. Additionally, a point of contact will be provided for local residents to raise any concerns directly with the management of the home.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1. It is maintained that there is little difference in planning terms between the proposed use and the current authorised use as an elderly persons care home. The carers, working on a rota basis, would effectively live at the dwelling house to provide 24-hour care, as a single household. Facilities such as the bathroom/wc, kitchen and living rooms would be shared and the living mode would be communal. The comings and goings associated with the use would not be materially different from a typical residential household.



4.2. The proposed use is to provide a stable home environment for the occupant as their main and sole residence and that the length of stay is generally more than temporary or passing. It would not be a 'halfway' house or provide overnight emergency lodgings for example. However, in any event, the courts have provided some assistance in determining the significance of there being a commercial factor to a residential use or an arrangement where the occupants have generally only a limited period of stay.

4.3. Comings and goings would be significantly less than could occur at present, hence there would be no undue disturbance to any neighbours. The local authority is therefore respectfully requested to support the application to allow this much needed facility to be established.