

Change of use of existing dwelling house to a children's home at 7 Tudor Byway, Kennington, Ashford, Kent, TN24 9DP – AS/25/1997 (KCC/AS/0162/2025)

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 17 December 2025.

Application by Kent County Council Infrastructure Division for a change of use of dwelling house (use class C3) to children's home (use class C2) at 7 Tudor Byway, Kennington, Ashford, Kent, TN24 9DP - AS/25/1997 (KCC/AS/0162/2025).

Recommendation: Permission be granted subject to conditions.

Local Member: Pamela Williams

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

1. The application site, an existing residential property, is located within the built-up area of Kennington, Ashford, which lies to the north of the M20 and Ashford Town Centre. Tudor Byway is located off Park Road which in turn is located off the A2042 Faversham Road which runs to the northeast of Ashford. The residential area is subject to a 20mph speed limit and is characterised by single and two storey detached properties within spacious plots. The property is situated on a corner plot with a rear garden and a heavily vegetated southern boundary. Beyond the north-western boundary runs a non-designated pedestrian footpath linking Tudor Byway and Park Road to Rylands Road. The property has a large driveway with an in and out access from both Tudor Byway and Park Road that can accommodate approximately five vehicles. The wider area is predominantly residential with some local facilities and services nearby. A pre-school, a primary school, and a Family Hub are located to the west of the site some 200 metres away on Belmont Road.

Background

2. The applicant advises that the proposed development is required to help address the current shortfall in suitable placements for children in need. Kent County Council (KCC) is seeking to invest in its own in-house residential care homes to deliver better outcomes by providing more suitable placements to best meet the needs of those children most in need.
3. The applicant advises that increasing residential placement costs within Children's Services was identified as a critical area within 'Securing Kent's Future – Budget Recovery Strategy' (reported to cabinet on 5 October 2023). As part of KCC's long term financial sustainability planning for Children's High-Cost Placements, investment in KCC's own in-house residential children's care homes is part of a range of options to deliver best value and better outcomes for children. Nationally other local authorities are already operating, or in advanced stages of delivering, in-house residential children's care homes and this planning application is seen as an important part of this strategy for Kent to meet this identified need.
4. Achieving best value from in-house residential children's care homes is not just about financial viability and cost-effectiveness. It is also about exercising Kent's corporate parenting responsibility to transition a looked after child to independence within

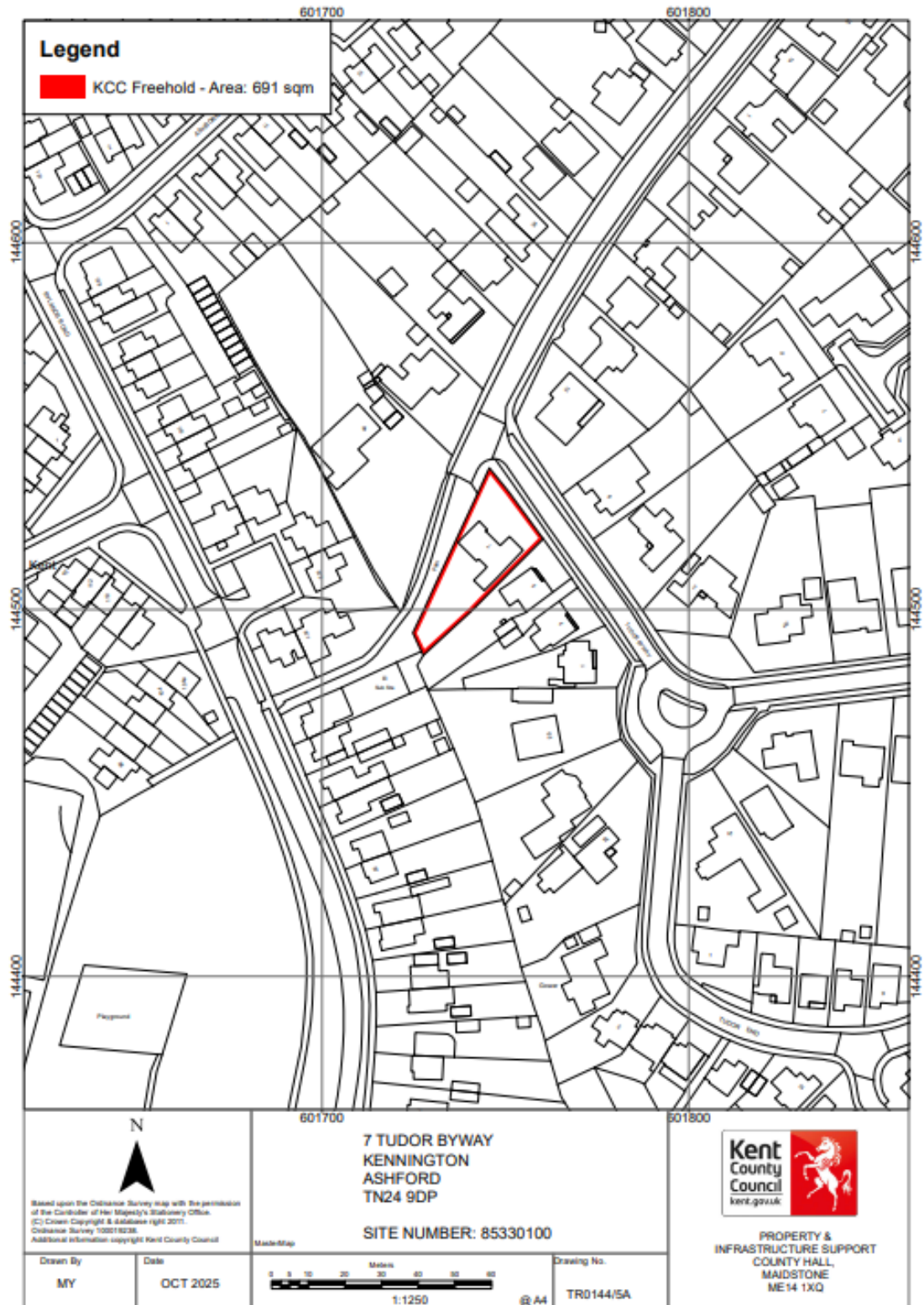
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Site Location Plan



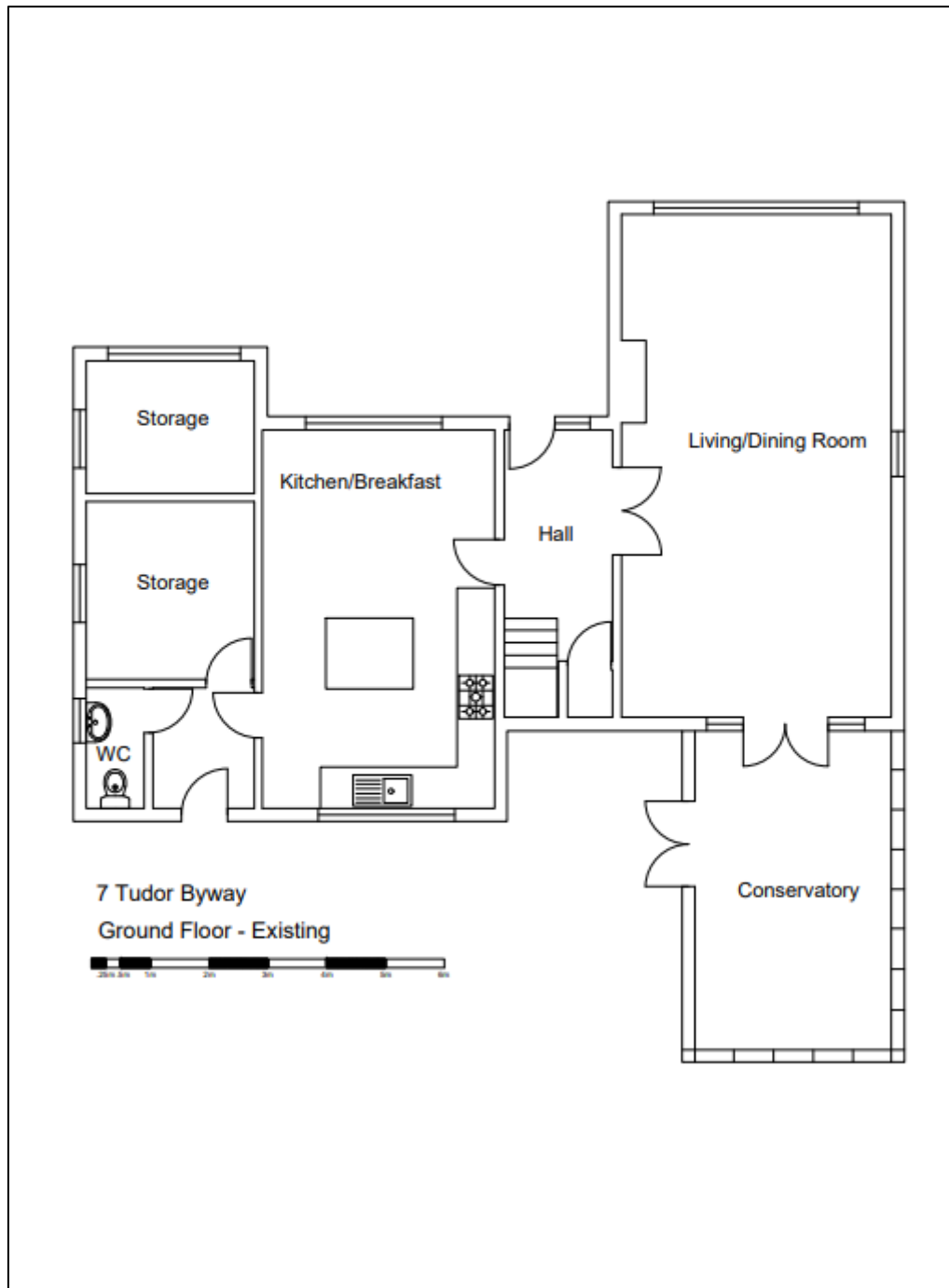
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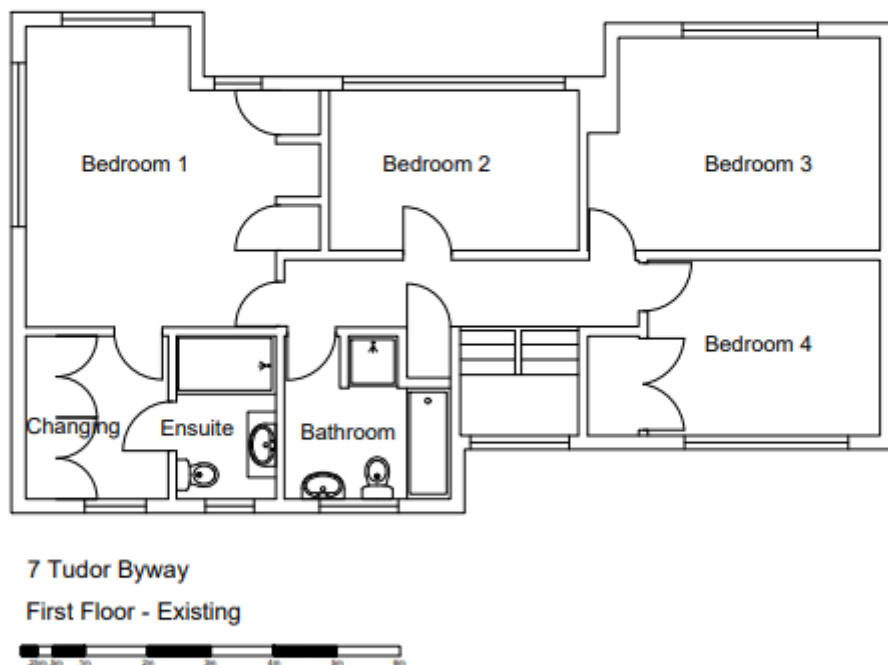
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Existing Ground Floor Plan



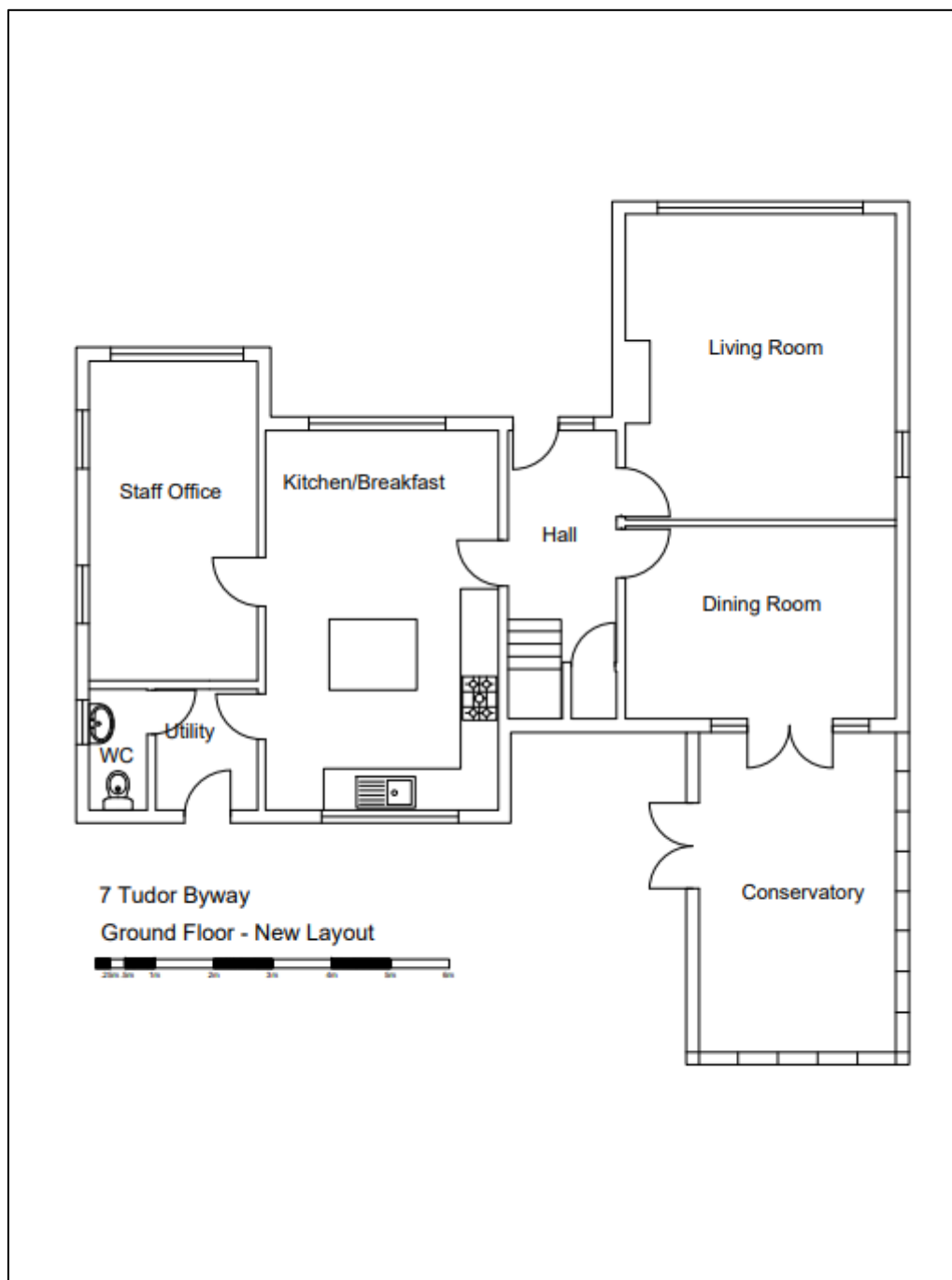
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Existing First Floor Plan



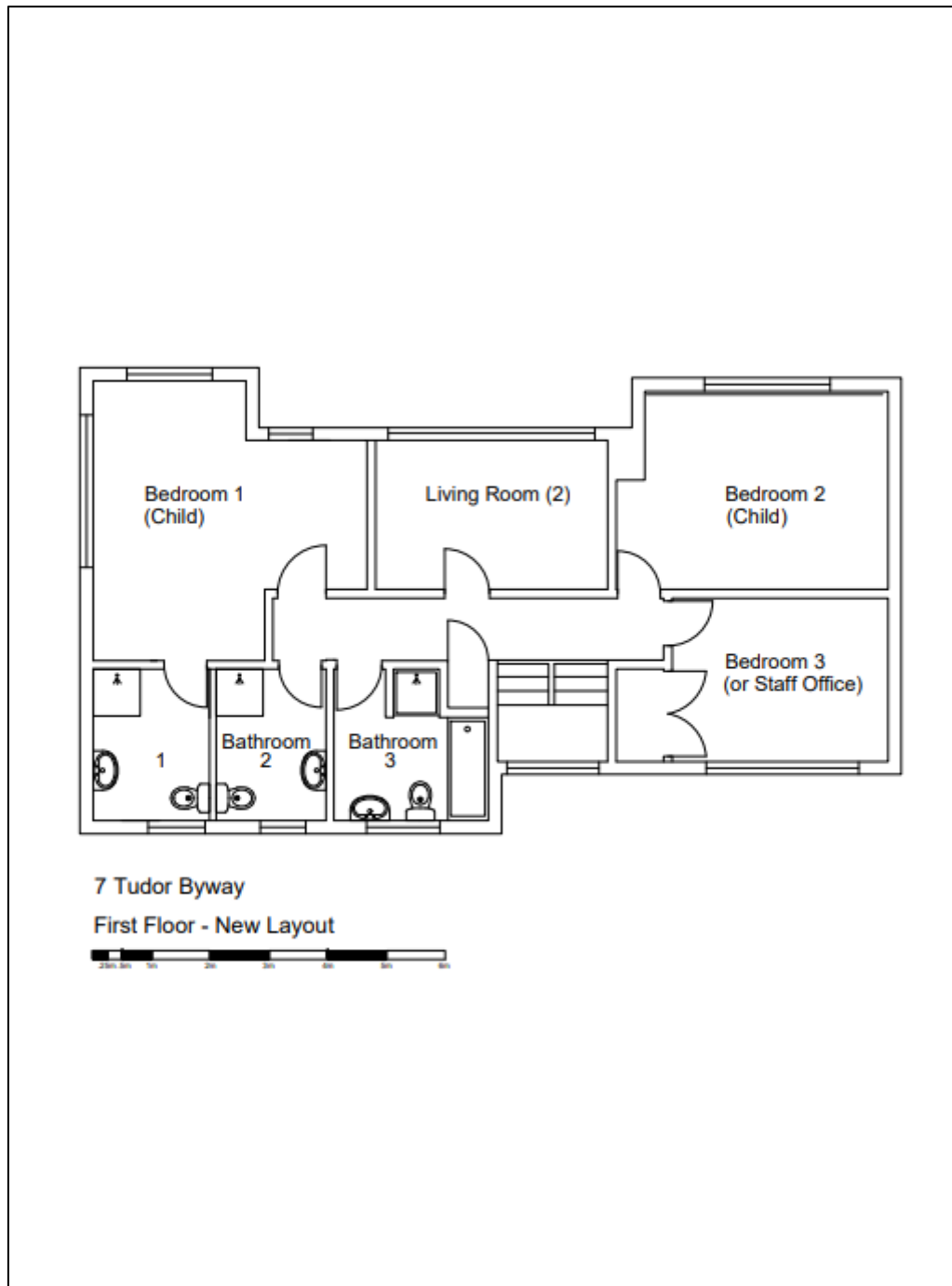
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Proposed Ground Floor Plan



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adulthood, experiencing the safest journey whilst developing social skills and resilience in emotional wellbeing and mental health.

5. KCC is actively working to reduce the use of unregistered accommodation (i.e. accommodation which is not registered with Ofsted). Unregistered accommodation is used exceptionally in an emergency where there is no other alternative in circumstances of imperative necessity and where the placement is essential to avoid a breach in the child's Convention Rights. Developing in-house residential children's care homes would ensure that KCC was only placing children in registered children's care homes under section 22C (6) (c) of the Children Act 1989. In accordance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Care Standards Act 2000 (Registration) (England) Regulations 2010, KCC would therefore need to seek registration of its children's care homes and the manager(s) of the homes from Ofsted. The residential children's care homes and the manager(s) would then be subject to Ofsted's regulatory regime.
6. Currently there is insufficient suitable registered provision within the County, resulting in a reliance on unregistered or out-of-area placements in emergencies. By developing in-house children's homes, KCC would both expand capacity to meet rising demand and would also ensure that all children would be placed in Ofsted-registered settings.
7. This application proposes a change of use of existing residential dwelling (use class C3) to a children's home (use class C2), which the applicant advises would address the shortfall in suitable placements and contribute to meeting the needs of under-represented sectors in the community.

Planning History

8. One previous planning application for this property had been submitted to Ashford Borough Council (as the appropriate Local Planning Authority to deal with residential planning applications) under planning reference AS/23/817 which was approved on 15 June 2023. The planning application description was for a proposed single storey rear extension following demolition of the existing conservatory. It is understood that this permission is yet to be implemented, and it remains extant until 15 June 2026 and could still be implemented within this timeframe.

Proposal

9. This planning application proposes a change of use of a residential dwelling (use class C3) to a residential institution (use class C2) to operate as a residential children's care home and to provide care and accommodation for up to two children. The proposed home would be registered with Ofsted for the care of two children from the ages of eight up to eighteen with social and emotional behavioural needs.
10. It is proposed that the home would be staffed by Kent County Council employees and would have a registered manager who would oversee a deputy manager and staff with delegated responsibility for the day to day care to the children. This care would be provided 24/7 throughout the year on a rota basis. The care would respond to the children's physical and emotional wellbeing needs, engaging the children in a program of education and activities by using positive support approaches, as well as supporting the children and young people to learn everyday skills to build independence. This is proposed to support the children's well-being and development. Staff would function as the children's carers by taking them to school and other extra-curriculum activities.

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11. It is proposed that the children's home would operate on a rota basis with a minimum of two staff on each shift. Dependant on the children in placement and their needs the type of overnight shifts would differ from between sleep in staff or waking night. It is also proposed to provide resting accommodation for the staff working within the home. Support staff would be present within the proposed home with ratios dependant on the children's individual support needs. One of these staff members would be a senior support worker overseeing the shift.
12. The existing house layout is already configured to provide homely and nurturing accommodation for children, which is required by Ofsted regulations. The house already comprises of a living/dining room, conservatory, family kitchen, utility room and WC, all of which are proposed to remain in their existing use. The large living/dining room is proposed to be reconfigured to reflect the home's original layout as built. There are four bedrooms on the first floor, one of which has an en-suite bathroom and changing room, and a family bathroom.
13. Proposed internal changes on the ground floor would include the formation of a staff office within the existing garage space, which is currently informally subdivided into two storage areas. The existing garage exterior would remain unchanged. On the first floor, the existing four bedrooms are proposed to be utilised as two children's bedrooms, a staff rest area/night office, and a lounge/relaxation breakout space. The proposed arrangement of the home would include a staff office and an additional resting staff bedroom which is necessary to ensure staff have immediate access to necessary administrative resources while remaining on-site for supervision and any required emergency response. The internal office provision falls within the ancillary rights of use class C2 and does not change the primary residential function.
14. To the rear of the property there is a garden secured with perimeter boundary fencing. The front of the property includes a large driveway that can accommodate approximately five vehicles, and the current access and entrance arrangements are proposed to remain unchanged from their existing form and design.
15. The proposed change of use would not involve any material alterations to the external fabric of the property. Any external works required, for example replacement fencing, would either consist of maintenance works which would not require planning approval, or fall under the definition of permitted development and therefore does not require the submission of a planning application.

Planning Policy

16. The following Guidance/Statements and Development Plan Policies summarised below are relevant to the consideration of the application:
 - (i) **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) December 2024** and the **Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)**, sets out the Government's planning policy guidance for England, at the heart of which is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The guidance is a material consideration for the determination of planning applications but does not change the statutory status of the development plan which remains the starting point for decision making. However, the weight given to development plan policies will depend on their consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the development plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

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In determining applications, the NPPF states that local planning authorities should approach decisions in a positive and creative way, and decision takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

In terms of delivering sustainable development in relation to this development proposal, the NPPF guidance and objectives covering the following matters are of particular relevance:

- planning law requires that applications for planning permission are to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible and within statutory timescales unless a longer period has been agreed by the applicant in writing (*paragraph 48*).
- within the context of establishing need the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies. These groups should include (but are not limited to) those who require affordable housing (including Social Rent); families with children; looked after children; older people (including those who require retirement housing, housing with-care and care homes); students; people with disabilities; service families; travellers; people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes (*paragraph 63*).
- whether impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity or congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree. Appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be – or have been – taken up, given the type of development and its location (*paragraph 115*). Development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road would be severe (*paragraph 116*).
- outlines that planning decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions (*paragraph 124*).
- the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve, and effective engagement is essential for achieving this (*paragraph 131*).
- achieving the requirement for a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings. Planning decisions should ensure that developments would function well and add to the overall quality of an area; be sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting; establish or maintain a strong sense of place, creating a welcoming and distinctive place to live, work and visit; include an appropriate mix of development and support local facilities and transport networks; and create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible (*paragraph 135*).

(ii) The adopted **Ashford Borough Council Local Plan 2030 (adopted February 2019)**

Policy SP1

Strategic Objectives: Seeks to deliver the 'vision', a number of strategic options have been identified. They form the basis of the

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Local Plan's policy framework as well as providing the core principles that planning applications must adhere to. They include:

- a. To focus development at accessible and sustainable locations which utilise existing infrastructure, facilities and services wherever possible and makes best use of suitable brownfield opportunities;
- e. To ensure development is supported by the necessary social, community, physical and e-technology infrastructure, facilities and services with any necessary improvements brought forward in a co-ordinated and timely manner;
- g. To provide a mix of housing types and sizes to meet the changing housing needs of the Borough's population including affordable homes, self-build and custom build properties, specialist housing for older and disabled people, accommodation to meet the needs of the Traveller community, spacious, quality family housing and for newly forming and downsizing households.

Policy SP6

Promoting High Quality Design: Seeks that development proposals must be of high quality design and demonstrate a careful consideration of and a positive response to each of the following design criteria:

- a) Character, distinctiveness and sense of place
- b) Ease of movement
- c) Legibility
- d) Mixed use and diversity
- e) Public safety and crime
- f) Quality of public spaces and their future management
- g) Flexibility and liveability
- h) Richness in detail
- i) Efficient use of natural resource

Policy TRA3(a)

Parking Standards for Residential Development: Seeks to ensure that proposals for residential development elsewhere (outside town centre area) shall achieve the following minimum parking standard:

4-bed dwelling – 3 spaces per unit (suburban and rural locations).

(iii) Other Material Considerations

17. In addition to the considerations arising from the planning policy section above, other strategic documents are also material considerations for the determination of this application.

Kent County Councils Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2022 to 2027

This document produced by Kent County Council and first published in August 2022, and updated in 2024, sets out the approach to meet the statutory responsibility to provide secure safe and appropriate accommodation to children in care, children in need and care leavers over the next five years.

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Consultations

18. The following consultee responses were received:

Ashford Borough Council raises no objection.

KCC Highways and Transportation Officer raises no objection.

Kennington Community Parish no comments have been received.

Local Member

19. The local County Member for Ashford Central, Pamela Williams, was notified of the application on 22 October 2025. No comments have been received.

Publicity

20. The application was publicised by the posting of 3 site notices on 27 October 2025.

Representations

21. In response to the publicity, 19 letters of objection to the application have been received.

Those making representations advise that the proposed use class C2 use is unsuitable for this location and will have a negative impact on highway safety, public safety and the residential amenity of nearby homes. A summary of the material planning issues raised is set out below:

Highway Matters

- The character of the quiet residential area will be negatively impacted by the continuous coming and going of vehicles and the storage of extra refuse containers that will be needed due to the proposed change of use.
- Tudor Byway is already under pressure from parked cars and narrow passing spaces which make manoeuvring difficult. The frequent staff visits carers and deliveries will worsen congestion and reduce safe access impacting both residents and neighbours.
- Tudor Byway is a short, narrow road and although there are 20 mile an hour limits, this limit is not always adhered to and more traffic will inevitably lead to increased noise, pollution levels, disturbance to residents, and safety issues.
- Many school children walk along Tudor Byway and use the alley alongside No. 7 Tudor Byway to reach the Phoenix Community Primary School situated around the corner on Belmont Road.
- There would be a considerable increase in traffic levels as the children are taken to and from school as well as extra-curricular activities.
- It would create parking issues for deliveries and the emergency services access.
- The proposed C2 use is unsuitable for this location and will have a negative impact on highway safety, public safety and the residential amenity of nearby homes.
- The fact that there is already a children's home in Park Road and the many cars that call there and parking at different times outside, this has already caused some access problems for the residents.

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- It is also unlikely that the staff are going to want to park on the driveway as they will be blocked in if other staff members park behind them. They will more likely choose the easiest option for themselves which is to park on the road closest to the home.
- There will be an overconcentration of care facilities operating as children's home which would undermine the residential character of the neighbourhood, and allowing a second facility within such a short distance would constitute an overconcentration of similar uses.
- The application documents claim that 7 Tudor Byway can accommodate five vehicles is misleading. Vehicles parked in tandem would not have independent access, leading either to increase on-street parking or regular manoeuvring, both of which would adversely affect road safety and local amenity.
- Pedestrians, including those with prams or mobility aids, are already forced onto the road at certain pinch points.

Amenity Matters

- This is a quiet area and not an appropriate place for a children's home. It would result in a loss of residential amenity through noise, visibility, and activity levels inconsistent with the character of the neighbourhood.
- Children with social, emotional, or behavioural challenges may require specialist environments with adequate outdoor space, professional oversight, and access to services. The property is an ordinary residential house in a quiet cul-de-sac, which may not be able to safely or effectively accommodate the behavioural support needs described in the application.
- Assurances are needed that the children placed here would not have behavioural issues which culminate into antisocial behaviour, causing damage to any resident's property, vehicles or show any form of aggression towards anyone.
- Allowing a second facility would result in an overconcentration of care facilities which would undermine the residential character of the neighbourhood.
- The existing children's home in Park Road, despite onsite parking results in staff parking on the public highway, causing access issues for residents. This pattern is likely to be replicated at 7 Tudor Byway.
- Staff change-overs to meet rota demand are likely to be at unsociable hours causing disturbance.

Public Safety

- There is an electrical substation located near to the property's garden. During the summer, the substation caught fire and required attendance by the fire service. This incident highlights the potential risks associated with the site's layout and proximity to neighbouring properties.
- There will be a problem for any dustcart, ambulance, fire engine or any large lorry as passing on such a narrow road is very tight.

Water Matters

- The site lies within the Stodmarsh catchment where all new development is required to demonstrate no increase in wastewater discharge. This application proposes two new bathrooms and potentially seven occupants (two children and up to five staff) onsite at any one time. That represents a clear intensification of use and increased water consumption compared with the lawful single-family dwelling.

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Discussion

22. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph 16 above. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) states that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The proposal therefore needs to be considered in the context of the Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity.
23. This application is being reported for determination by the Planning Applications Committee due to objections received from local residents following publicity of the application. In my opinion, the key material planning considerations in this particular case are the principle of and need for the development, impact on residential amenity, and transportation and highway considerations.

Principle of Development and Need

24. The principle of the proposed development is to help address the current shortfall in suitable placements for an under-represented part of the community by providing two additional placements for children in need, while ensuring that the development would not affect the character or amenity of the surrounding neighbourhood. Through Kent County Council investing in its own in-house residential care homes, it can provide suitable Ofsted registered placements to best meet the requirements of children most in need in Kent.
25. Increasing residential placement costs within Children's Services was identified as a critical area within 'Securing Kent's Future – Budget Recovery Strategy' (October 2023). As part of KCC's long term financial sustainability planning for Children's High-Cost Placements, investment in KCC's own in-house residential children's care homes is part of a range of options to deliver best value and better outcomes for children. The proposal would also exercise Kent's corporate parenting responsibility to transition a looked after child to independence within adulthood, developing social skills and resilience in emotional wellbeing and mental health. Furthermore it is also proposed to reduce the use of Ofsted unregistered accommodation and developing in-house residential children's care homes would ensure that KCC was only placing children in registered children's care homes under section 22C (6) (c) of the Children Act 1989.
26. The current shortage of suitable children's homes reinforces the need for more homes and related services. I consider that this proposed change of use would address that shortfall in suitable placements and would align with Policy SP1 (Strategic Objectives) and Paragraph 63 of the NPPF. The change of use from use class C3 to C2 would support the Council's objective to provide a diverse mix of housing to meet identified needs for specialist accommodation within the community, and align with national policy which highlights the importance of meeting the required size, type, and tenure of housing for different groups, including children in care.
27. It is acknowledged that the change of use would result in the loss of one residential dwelling in the Ashford Borough Council area which currently demonstrates a 4.39 year housing land supply against the required five years. However, given that the loss is minimal and the change of use would directly address an urgent community shortfall for

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specialist accommodation, it should be considered acceptable and would not significantly impact the council's overall housing supply.

28. It is evident that from the above there is clear policy support and backing for the delivery of in-house residential children's care homes. I am therefore satisfied that there is a case of need for the development and support the principle of the proposed change of use.

Impact on Local and Residential Amenity

29. The proposed development would help to address the current shortfall in suitable placements for an under-represented group within the community by providing two additional placements for children in need, while ensuring that the proposed change of use would not in my view materially affect the character of the surrounding neighbourhood.

Impact on the character of the area

30. The proposed change of use would not involve any material alterations to the external fabric of the property and would not, in my view, materially alter the nature of the current residential dwelling use or adversely affect the character of the wider residential area. The proposed children's home, in terms of its layout, facilities and overall character, would be very similar to a property occupied as a family dwelling house and the use would operate in a way that mirrors a typical family home.
31. Whilst the proposed change of use from use class C3 (residential dwelling) to use class C2 (residential institution) for use as a children's home, may appear as a significant shift in use, in practice this would not be the case. The total number of children and staff residing there would not be significantly greater than the number of people who might occupy the home under a family scenario. The number of occupants and the intensity of the use remains broadly the same, with no increase in overnight sleeping accommodation and only 2 children living at the property at any one time.
32. I consider that the key difference between the proposed use class C2 as a children's home and a use class C3 (residential dwelling) use relates to the arrangement of care provision. The children's home would accommodate a maximum of two young people, with two staff members on duty at all times and overnight, operating on a shift pattern. Given the level of occupancy and these anticipated shift patterns, the overall activity and general comings and goings would be comparable to those of a family household. Indeed, it is common for adult children to still reside in the family home, themselves owning cars and commuting to and from work in addition to the parents.
33. As the current proposal is for a comparable use to a residential property in terms of occupancy and day to day activities, I consider that any material impacts to the character of the area would be minimal. Given this, I see no reason to refuse the application on this ground. In my view, the residential character of the area would be retained, and the use of the property as a children's care home would be compatible with neighbouring land uses.
34. Paragraphs 131 and 136 of the NPPF set out that new development needs to be of an appropriate design and that proposals should be of a character sympathetic to the local area, establishing a sense of place, taking into account building materials and building

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styles. The proposed change of use would not involve any material alterations to the property's exterior, retaining the existing residential scale and appearance of the building. Therefore, I am satisfied that the proposed development would have little or no impact on the existing residential character of the surrounding area.

Residential Amenity

35. Concern and objection have been received from local residents that the proposal would have a negative impact on the existing residential area and would have a detrimental impact on the amenity of local residents. Local residents also express concern that there is an existing children's home located at 40 Park Avenue and have raised concern about a second such facility in close proximity. This will be discussed in more detail in paragraphs 43 to 45 below.
36. As advised above, there are no plans to change the appearance of the existing dwelling house. The proposed children's home in terms of its layout, facilities and overall character, would be very similar to a property occupied as a family dwelling house and the proposed change of use would operate in a way that would mirror a typical family home.
37. It is acknowledged that the site is surrounded by residential properties, and concerns have been raised regarding possible increased comings and goings affecting neighbouring amenity. During working hours, it is proposed that up to five staff members (support, care, and management) would be present at the children's home at any one time and that this number would reduce at weekends, when two care staff would be on duty. When the children are at school, only support and management staff are proposed to remain on the site. The applicant advises that visitor attendance would be infrequent and strictly pre-arranged. Furthermore, it is proposed that shift changeover times would be scheduled to avoid the local primary school's drop-off and pick-up times, thereby minimising any potential disruption to the surrounding neighbourhood.
38. It is proposed that two staff members would be present through the night, with provision made for a staff resting area. This arrangement would reflect typical domestic routines and occupation. Given that the proposed use would involve only two children and that the number of staff and nature of activity would be comparable to those of a typical family occupying a four-bedroom dwelling, the use of the home would not result in unacceptable levels of noise or disturbance and would remain consistent with residential accommodation.
39. While it is acknowledged that there may be some additional activity during staff shift changeovers, the limited scale of the use and the small number of staff mean this would not result in a material difference from the normal day-to-day activities typically associated with use class C3 (residential dwelling). Such activities include deliveries and refuse collection, the school run, working from home activities, or in the case of properties occupied by elderly or disabled residents, visits from carers providing regular daily support.
40. Regarding the proposed use of the existing garage as a staff office, it is noteworthy that this sort of internal alteration is not uncommon in many residential dwelling houses around the country and would not materially alter its basic character as a residential dwelling. There are no major modifications and configurations required to this property

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and therefore it can be considered that this provision as part of the proposed use would also not materially alter the existing residential dwelling house character.

41. I therefore consider that the proposed change of use would demonstrate no material difference in the nature or intensity of occupation compared to a C3 residential dwelling. Additionally, it should be noted that the internal office provision falls within the ancillary rights of use class C2 and does not change the primary residential function. The proposed layout, facilities, and activity patterns compare to those of many typical family households, and I consider it would result in no adverse impact on the general amenity of the local area.

Noise and Disturbance

42. Concerns have been raised in respect of impact on the future child occupants of the care home resulting from the use of the adjacent pedestrian footpath and adjacent residential gardens by owners/occupiers in terms of capability of use. Noise and disturbance concerns have also been raised regarding impacts on local residents resulting from the property operating as a children's home. Having reviewed and considered these, I do not consider there to be any material difference in respect of these issues between occupancy as a family dwelling or occupancy as use class C2 children's home for up to 2 children. The purported risks identified, would apply equally to any family living in the property. In fact, given the home would be staffed at all times, it is likely any such risks would be more closely managed in a use class C2 use. I am therefore satisfied that the use of the property as a children's home would be compatible with neighbouring land uses, and do not consider that noise and disturbance would be any greater than that generated by use as a family home. The applicant is also satisfied that neighbouring land uses, including the adjacent footway, would not be a cause of concern for the end user.

Existing Children's Home in Park Road and Parking Matters

43. Comments have been received regarding an existing children's care home located at 40 Park Road and that by having another residential dwelling converted to a children's home, this would result in an overconcentration of care facilities. Further comments have been received raising concern that despite the 40 Park Road property having a driveway capable of accommodating at least three vehicles, staff members appear to prefer on-street parking to avoid being blocked in by colleagues during shift changes. Concern is raised that this pattern is also likely to be replicated at 7 Tudor Byway.
44. The change of use of 40 Park Road from a residential dwelling to a children's home was determined by Ashford Borough Council, as the appropriate planning authority for residential development not intended for the County Council's purposes. Local residents have raised concern that the current employees of the Park Avenue children's home seem to be parking on the public highway rather than on the driveway of the property. Concern is raised that the same may happen with this proposed children's home, and staff preferring to park on the public highway rather than the property's driveway. It should be noted that there are no parking restrictions in Park Road and Tudor Byway, and there is no evidence to suggest that the vehicles associated with the existing children's home are parking inconsiderably or causing any safety issues or obstructions.

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45. Whilst it is not contested that there may be times where more vehicles are present on the highway, it has been mentioned in the comments received from local residents themselves, that the area is a low speed environment with available passing. If it was considered dangerous in any places for vehicles to be parked on street, then it would be in the gift of the Highways Authority to introduce parking restrictions and yellow lines. Kent Highways have been consulted on this planning application and raised no objection. It is recognised that 40 Park Road does not benefit from the same level of off-street parking as is available at this property, so I do not consider it to be a relevant comparison in that regard. Whilst I am unable to comment on the existing children's home or the vehicle parking that takes place in the vicinity of this property, I am satisfied that this current proposal would not result in any severe highway impacts or any material highway safety impacts, particularly given the generous on-plot parking provision. This matter will be discussed in more detail below.

Transportation and Highway Considerations

46. Concerns have been raised regarding the potential highway impact of the proposals with a number of residents citing that increased parking would occur on the road. It has also been raised that the proposed development would likely lead to significant traffic congestion in the area and alter the character of the neighbourhood. The street is currently quiet and residential in nature, but this proposal is considered by residents to increase both vehicle and pedestrian traffic.
47. As advised above, the proposed children's home, would be very similar to a property occupied as a family dwelling house and the proposed use would operate in a way that would mirror a typical family home. The site has been chosen by KCC as it provides off street parking for up to 5 vehicles, which would accommodate the anticipated maximum demand based on staffing. The two children would be taken to and from school and extracurricular activities each day and would receive supervision by carers and staff, who would engage with the property in a manner similar to adult residents, parents or guardians.
48. During working hours, it is proposed that up to five staff members (support, care, and management) would be present at the children's home at any one time and that this number would reduce to two care staff at weekends. Visitor attendance would be infrequent and strictly pre-arranged. Furthermore, it is proposed that shift changeover times would be scheduled to avoid the local primary school's drop-off and pick-up times, thereby minimising any potential disruption to the surrounding neighbourhood. It is acknowledged that at staff changeover times, additional cars may be present, and it would be the responsibility of the Registered Manager/Shift Leader to ensure staff co-ordinate change over to at all times minimise any on-street parking.
49. In light of the above, it is not considered that the proposed use would create any increase in highway congestion and parking demand at the property over the existing lawful occupation as a residential dwelling. Notwithstanding this, the home selected is approximately a 12-minute cycle ride from Ashford International Station, and staff are anticipated to be local. They would be encouraged to travel by walking, cycling, public transport, or car sharing. Staff working in the home would not always be required to drive. From assessing other children's home, it is found that care roles such as these are often staffed locally and the sites accessibility within the Ashford urban area was a key factor in its selection by KCC. Sufficient parking is available on-site to accommodate staff and visitors, which aligns with the minimum parking standards in

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Policy TRA3(a). The property benefits from a generous driveway within its curtilage, with a separate entrance and exit, which would mitigate any need to park on the local road.

50. It is not considered that the proposed use would create any increase in highway congestion and parking demand at the dwelling over the existing lawful occupation as a dwelling. It would not be uncommon for some households such as those with adult children still living at home, to have multiple cars and drivers in a single household.
51. Tudor Byway and Park Road are both subject to a 20mph speed limit. There are no parking restrictions in these roads which would prevent local residents, their visitors and deliveries from parking on the public highway. All occupiers have equal permission to park on the public highway. Furthermore, if it was considered dangerous in any places for vehicles to be parked on street then it would be in the gift of the Highways Authority to introduce parking restrictions and yellow lines. However it should be noted that Kent Highways have been consulted on this planning application and raised no objection to the proposed change of use of the residential dwelling to a children's home.
52. I therefore consider the proposed development to be acceptable on highway grounds and would have sufficient off road car parking to cater for staff. It therefore complies with local plan policy TRA3(a) and the NPPF regarding transportation and highway considerations.

Other Planning Issues

53. Other comments have been received from local residents, which have been considered as follows;

Nutrient Neutrality

54. Comments have been received that the site lies within the Stodmarsh catchment where all new development is required to demonstrate no increase in wastewater discharge and that this development would represent a clear intensification of use and increased water consumption compared with the lawful single-family dwelling.
55. The site lies within the Ashford Borough Council area and the Stodmarsh catchment, which is defined as an area subject to nutrient neutrality considerations. Nutrient neutrality requires developments for new overnight accommodation to prove that all surface water runoff and wastewater generated by the development would be less than, or equal to, the nutrients generated by the existing land use.
56. The site is already in use as a residential property with overnight accommodation and the proposed change of use maintains this function. The proposal involves a change of use with minimal internal alterations, and without increasing the number of habitable rooms and with no material intensification of use. Additionally, the occupation levels would not be materially different to what would currently be expected of the four bedroom dwelling. I therefore consider that the proposed change of use would not result in a material increase in nutrient output from this site.
57. Whilst the proposal would include the addition of a third bathroom through the internal reconfiguration it should be noted that this would not impact occupancy levels. Furthermore as part of the refurbishment the applicant has confirmed that water

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consumption measures such as timer taps and showers would be installed throughout the property to further minimise water usage.

58. On the basis that there is no proposed increase in overnight accommodation, which is the relevant test with regard to nutrient neutrality. I do not therefore consider it necessary to secure any mitigation in order for the proposed change of use of the residential dwelling to achieve nutrient neutrality.

Site Management and Maintenance

59. Comments have been received that the existing property has a large mature garden with many established trees and bushes, and concern has been raised about who would be responsible for the upkeep of the grounds under the proposed change of the residential dwelling into a children's care home.
60. Whilst this is not a material planning consideration, I would advise that the site would be staffed and managed by Kent County Council and issues relating to the management and operation of the proposed children's care home facility fall under separate legislation and regulations which would all be strictly followed in accordance with Ofsted requirements.

Substation

61. Comments have been received relating to the nearby substation located near the bottom of the property's garden, and that during the summer, the substation caught fire and required attendance by the fire service. The site would be managed to ensure safety for all, and any associated risks or issues would not be materially different to the same risks that might present themselves if occupied as a family dwelling.

Conclusion

62. This planning application proposes a change of use of a residential dwelling (use class C3) to a residential institution (use class C2) to operate as a residential children's care home and to provide care and accommodation for up to two children. The proposed home would be registered with Ofsted for the care of two children from the ages of eight up to eighteen with social and emotional behavioural needs. The proposal has given rise to a variety of planning issues including the principle of development and the need; impact on residential amenity, and transportation and highway considerations. These matters have been considered and addressed in detail throughout this report. Subject to the imposition of the conditions listed below, I am satisfied that the proposed change of use from a residential dwelling house to a children's home would not adversely impact the residential character of the area, neighbouring and local amenity or the surrounding highway network.
63. There is strong strategic and policy support for the provision of in-house residential children's care homes. The proposed development would address the current shortfall in suitable placements by providing two additional placements for children in need, while ensuring that the proposed change of use would not materially affect the character or amenity of the surrounding neighbourhood. The development would satisfy the County Council's 'Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2022 to 2027' and there is further support in the NPPF and the development plan policies in the Ashford Borough Local Plan, at the heart of which is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It is

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evident from the above that there is clear policy support and backing for the delivery of in-house children's care homes.

64. Having had due regard to the planning documents submitted as part of this application, the consultation responses received and representations made, I am of the opinion that the proposed development, subject to the conditions listed below, would not give rise to any material harm, is acceptable and is otherwise in accordance with the general aims and objectives of the relevant Development Plan Policies and the guidance contained within the NPPF. I therefore recommend that planning permission be granted subject to the planning conditions set out below.

Recommendation

65. I RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE GRANTED, SUBJECT TO the imposition of conditions covering (amongst other matters) the following:

1. Development shall commence within 3 years of the date of the permission;
2. Development to be carried out in accordance with the submitted details.

Case Officer: Mrs Lidia Cook

Tel. no: 03000 413353

Background Documents: see section heading
