

Homes for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

- 8.40 National guidance advises that local plan policies should aim to meet the housing needs of specific groups, including looked after children. This policy seeks to address these needs in a sustainable way which takes account of the potential vulnerability of this group.

Policy H6 - Homes for Looked after Children and Care Leavers

In determining applications for new children's homes and Ofsted regulated semi-independent supported accommodation the Council will seek to ensure that new provision:

- a. Is in a suitable, sustainable location and appropriate premises;
- b. Does not result in the clustering or over-concentration of provision for looked-after children in any particular area of the borough; and
- c. Is in accordance with policy DM1 to ensure the amenity of occupiers and existing residents is taken into account.

With regards to criterion b, permission may not be granted where it will be within 400 metres of existing properties meeting similar needs. The Council will make a decision on a case-by-case basis and considering the factors listed above and any site-specific circumstances.

Applicants should liaise with Children's Services within the Council at the earliest opportunity to seek to ensure that priority is given to children and young people from the borough in the first instance.

Places for Everyone Links:

Policy JP- H3 Type, Size and Design of New Housing

Reasoned Justification

- 8.41 Meeting the needs of looked after children is an important part of the Local Authority's role, and it is important that these potentially vulnerable children and young people are provided with the right homes in the right places, with access to schools / colleges and the support that they need.
- 8.42 The relevant acts and guidance relating to children's homes and accommodation for care leavers sets specific requirements for registration and standards for such housing. This includes the preparation of location assessments to show the steps that have been taken to make sure that the home is needed locally, is in the right place and is safe, and that it promotes positive opportunities for children and young people.
- 8.43 Accommodation created for children's homes and care leavers should be in sustainable locations, appropriate for the proposed occupants and comply with the criteria set out in the policy. New facilities must be well integrated into the local community and operated in accordance with a robust management plan.

- 8.44 In order to support the best interests of the occupants of these homes and to protect local character and amenity, it is important that new developments do not result in an over-concentration of homes for looked after children and care leavers within a local area. In order to demonstrate that the proposed development would not result in any clustering of children's residential care home uses and Ofsted registered supported accommodation, the Council will seek to avoid new provision being approved within 400 metres of existing provision. Applicants should carry out an assessment and provide this as part of their planning application, although it is acknowledged that some such information will not be publicly accessible in order to safeguard the children in care. The Council will utilise GIS and other desktop assessment tools in assessing the information provided.
- 8.45 It is important to note that planning permission will not be required in all cases of development of children's homes, including for changes of use from dwelling houses in class C3 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 where the children's home remains within class C3 or there is no material change of use to class C2 (to be determined on a case by case basis). It will not be possible to apply this policy in such situations. We would however encourage all accommodation providers to engage with the Local Authority to ensure that the accommodation and its location are appropriate to meet local needs.
- 8.46 If the Council determines that such changes of use require further control to ensure that vulnerable children and young people are accommodated in appropriate locations and any wider issues of community integration are addressed, then the Council may take a view that a change of use from a dwelling-house to a children's care home will result in a material change of use, on a case-by-case basis. If appropriate the Council will seek to introduce an Article 4 Direction covering part, or all, of the Borough to remove relevant permitted development rights.