



DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

**105, CLAY LANE,
ROCHDALE,
OL11 5QW**

**‘Change of use of a dwelling (3a) to a family assessment
centre’(C2)**

10/10/2024



1. The Proposal

- 1.1. I am writing on behalf of my client 'Flourish Fostering Limited' who is seeking permission to use 105 Clay Lane, currently a dwelling (C3a), as a family assessment centre falling within Class C2 (Residential Institutions).
- 1.2. Flourish Fostering (FF) is an experienced provider of therapeutic fostering services to local authorities in the northwest and south of England. As part of its fostering provision, it supports parent and child placements within a family setting. It intends to extend its provision by offering residential placements in a family assessment centre.
- 1.3. According to a recent OFSTED report, Main findings: children's social care in England 2023, it stated: children's social care in England 2023, in England there are just over 400,000 children in the social care system at any one time, and just over [82,000 of these children are children in care](#). In this report it was noted that there were only 78 Residential Family Centres with a potential capacity of 444. This number is 0.1% of the children that are involved in social care.
- 1.4. According to NSPCC Research, it has proven that early help and intervention can: protect children from harm, reduce the need for a referral to child protection services, improve children's long-term outcomes, improve children's home and family life, support children to develop strengths and skills to prepare them for adult life, thus preventing them from becoming long term children in care. Residential Family Assessment Centres offer families the direct support to learn how to parent positively and achieve positive outcomes of keeping families safe and together where possible.
- 1.5. FF services will deliver parenting assessments, usually lasting 12 weeks in length, in a residential setting, which occurs if local Social Services have requested a parenting capacity assessment to be completed.
- 1.6. A parenting assessment is designed to work out what knowledge a parent has about his/her child's needs until adulthood and analyses the ability to give the child/children 'good enough' care. The assessor



will observe the emotional connection, communication and playtime with the children.

- 1.7. A report of the findings from the parenting assessment will be provided with a recommendation about whether the assessor thinks the parent(s) are able to care for the child/children in the long-term.
- 1.8. The report may provide recommendations of what support, if any, parent(s) may need to be able to care for the children safely.
- 1.9. Flourish would provide a safe place for the child/children, whilst offering support, teaching and assessment to parents, all of which would be underpinned by the Flourish therapeutic approach. With the child's safety the priority, it would endeavour to equip parents in making confident life choices now and in the future, to enable them to make a positive contribution to their community and society.
- 1.10. To achieve this, it would offer the support required to parents to allow them to grow and change behaviours where possible.
- 1.11. The service, to be located in the property, would house up to four parent and child placements at any one time and would be supported 24/7 by a staff team of two social workers, two care workers and a registered manager (8am – 8pm) plus, at night, by two care workers (8pm – 8am). There would be no work undertaken or activities at night. This means a maximum of five staff in the day and two at night.
- 1.12. The property is a detached bungalow, in a quiet residential area, with off street parking for seven cars (two in a double garage and five on the driveway) and sufficient garden space for the parents and children. The residents will not have their own transport and therefore the current parking provision of seven spaces is sufficient for the proposed staffing and visitor numbers.
- 1.13. As part of the assessment, parents would be supported to access local community services including health centres, community and play groups, shops and green spaces. Residents would always be supervised both within and outside the property as part of the assessment process.



2. Planning Policy Assessment

- 2.1. The planning policy framework is provided by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Rochdale Core Strategy Adopted October 2016.

NPPF

- 2.2. 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.
- 2.3. Paragraph 109 is specifically relevant which advises that 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 network would be severe.
- 2.4. Section 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities emphasises the need to make appropriate provision for the special needs of young people and families.

Rochdale Core Strategy

- 2.5. Policy SO2 (*To create successful and healthy communities*) and C6 (*Improving health and well-being*) support proposal to address community needs which will contribute to healthy and successful communities.
- 2.6. There are no parking standards specified for this type of home.

Principle of development

- 2.7. The proposed use is residential in nature and hence the principle of the use is considered to be acceptable.
- 2.8. Following *Gravesham BC v Secretary of State for the Environment* [1982], the court accepted that the distinctive characteristic of a dwelling house was its ability to afford to those who used it the facilities required for day-day private domestic existence. It did not lose that characteristic if it was occupied for only part of the year, or at infrequent intervals, or by a series of different persons or if it was under commercial management.



Neighbours Amenity

- 2.9. Such a facility is unlikely to generate any more noise than the current use as a family dwelling.
- 2.10. It is a large property with a large garden, comings and goings are unlikely to adversely affect neighbours. The manager would arrive by car each weekday (9am to 5pm) and the other staff (two social works and two carers would attend from 8.30am until 6.30pm.
- 2.11. In order to reduce the need for staff parking, the company encourage staff to use local taxis, which they subsidise.

Parking

- 2.12. There is no specific parking policy for such a use in the Local Plan. It is considered that the existing provision of off-street parking 7 spaces, with an electrical charging point, is sufficient for the proposed staffing and visitor numbers, in accordance with Paragraph 109 , which advises that '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 network would be severe'.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1. As stated in 1.13 above, there is strong market demand and low supply for this service across England and particularly in the north.
- 3.2. In terms of the impact on the neighbourhood, it is considered there will be little material difference from the current use.
- 3.3. The local authority is respectfully requested to approve the application without delay.