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Local Needs Assessment Report

Proposed Change of Use from C3 Dwellinghouse to C2 – Children’s Residential Care Home (Up to 4 Children)

Site Address: 13 Norwich Road, Northwood, HA6 1ND

London Borough of Hillingdon

Prepared by: V-Design Cad Services Ltd

Date: 14-01-2026

1. Executive Summary

This report provides evidence that there is a clear and urgent **local need for children’s residential care placements (Use Class C2)** within the **London Borough of Hillingdon** and demonstrates that the proposed change of use from a **C3 dwellinghouse** to a **C2 children’s residential care home** at **13 Norwich Road, Northwood** will help address that need.

Key points

1. Hillingdon faces documented placement sufficiency pressures for looked-after children, with a significant proportion of children requiring residential placements being placed **outside the Borough** due to limited local capacity.
2. Existing local provision comprises **a limited number of small-scale homes**, including **very small 1-child provision**, and a small number of homes providing **up to 4 placements**, alongside specialist provision (e.g., disability-related provision). This indicates structurally constrained local capacity relative to demand.
3. The proposed development would provide **up to 4 Ofsted-regulated placements** in a domestic setting, with **24/7 staffing** and robust management controls (via a separate **Operational Management Plan**), supporting stability and local service access for vulnerable children.

4. Although the proposal results in the loss of one C3 dwelling, the planning balance must weigh this against the **substantial public benefit** of delivering essential social infrastructure (children's residential care) and meeting statutory responsibilities.

Conclusion

Subject to appropriate operational safeguards and technical controls (OMP, transport/parking strategy and, where required, noise mitigation), the proposal delivers significant social benefits aligned with national, London Plan and local planning policy objectives for supported and specialised accommodation, and should be supported in the planning balance.

2. Introduction and Scope

The London Borough of Hillingdon has statutory duties under the **Children Act 1989** to safeguard children and provide appropriate care placements where children cannot live safely at home. Where suitable placements are not available locally, children may be placed outside the Borough, which can negatively impact:

- placement stability and continuity of care,
- education continuity and access to local services,
- ability to maintain family and community connections, and
- local authority budgets due to higher placement costs and travel/social work time.

This report:

- establishes the level of local need for children's residential care,
- reviews existing local C2 provision relevant to Hillingdon's commissioning geography,
- explains why a small (4-bed) home is an appropriate form of provision, and
- supports the planning justification for approval.

3. Planning Policy Context

3.1 National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) supports the delivery of social infrastructure and community facilities where there is identified need and requires development to protect residential amenity through good design and appropriate mitigation.

3.2 Regional Policy – The London Plan

London Plan Policy H12 (Supported and Specialised Accommodation) supports the delivery of specialist accommodation, including care-related uses, where need is demonstrated and impacts are appropriately managed. Other relevant London Plan principles include protection of residential amenity and ensuring development functions successfully within its context.

3.3 Local Policy – Hillingdon Local Plan (Part 2)

The proposal is primarily assessed against:

- **Policy DMH8 (Care Homes / Specialist Accommodation):** supports such uses where there is an identified local need, the location is appropriate, and the proposal does not result in harmful over-concentration or unacceptable impacts.
- **Policy DMH1 (Safeguarding Existing Housing):** relevant because the existing use is C3 and the proposal would remove one dwelling from the general housing stock. This must be addressed through the planning balance and demonstrated public benefit.
- **Policy DMHB11 (Design / Amenity):** requires proposals to safeguard residential amenity (noise, disturbance, activity levels).
- **Transport/Parking policies (e.g., DMT series):** require the proposal to be acceptable in highway safety and parking terms (addressed through the Transport Assessment & OMP).

4. Current Use of the Site

The property at **13 Norwich Road, Northwood** is currently a **C3 dwellinghouse**.

The proposed use is a **C2 children's residential care home for up to 4 children**, with **24/7 staffing supervision** and **Ofsted regulation**.

Comparative overview (planning-relevant)

FEATURE	CURRENT C3 DWELLING	PROPOSED C2 CHILDREN'S HOME
OCCUPANCY	Single household	Up to 4 children
SUPERVISION	None required	24/7 trained staff
REGULATION	General housing	Ofsted + safeguarding standards
VISITORS	Normal domestic pattern	Pre-booked, controlled visiting
BEHAVIOUR CONTROLS	Household discretion	Formal controls via OMP
AMENITY PROTECTION	Informal	Enforceable operational controls

Key point: While the proposal results in a loss of one C3 unit, the C2 use is **tightly regulated and managed**, and can be conditioned to control amenity impacts.

5. Local Demand for Children's Residential Care (Hillingdon)

5.1 Borough need indicators (latest Council-published evidence used in prior reports)

Council material (Children's Services / committee reporting and sufficiency strategy work) indicates significant demand for residential placements, including:

- **Total looked-after children (LAC): 285**
- **Children requiring residential (C2) placements: 56**
- **Children placed outside the Borough due to lack of local provision: 34**
- **Looked-after children with an EHCP: 34.1%**
- **Looked-after children receiving SEND support: 16.3%**

Key findings (planning interpretation):

1. Approximately **1 in 5** looked-after children may require a residential placement.
2. A substantial proportion of those requiring residential placements are placed **out of Borough**, indicating insufficient local capacity.
3. Higher levels of EHCP/SEND complexity in the looked-after cohort increases demand for specialist, supervised placements.
4. The Borough has reported increases in demand pressures linked to UASC inflows (where relevant to the referenced period).

6. Existing Local Provision (Site-specific review – Northwood / Hillingdon commissioning geography)

6.1 Safeguarding note (addresses)

Ofsted does not publish children's home addresses in many cases for safeguarding reasons. Accordingly, this report references **Ofsted URNs and provider/LA information only**. If the LPA requires confirmation of proximity mapping, this can be provided via a **confidential appendix to officers** (not for public circulation).

6.2 Summary of known local provision types relevant to this site

For a site in **Northwood (Hillingdon)**, the most relevant provision is the network of Ofsted-registered children's homes **commissioned/used within Hillingdon's placement system**, which includes:

- **Very small provision (1 child capacity)** – typically used for high-risk or high-need placements, indicating constrained "bed" numbers.
- **Small homes (up to 4 placements)** – typical domestic-scale model used for stabilisation and longer-term care depending on needs.

- **Specialist larger capacity provision (e.g., disability/short breaks)** – often not interchangeable with mainstream SEMH placements, therefore does not necessarily relieve general demand.

6.3 Why this matters for 13 Norwich Road

- Demand pressures cited in Council material (residential need and out-of-borough placements) indicate that **existing supply is insufficient**.
- Where a Borough relies on multiple small units (including 1-child homes) and limited 4-bed capacity, marginal additions (such as a **4-placement home**) can make a measurable contribution to local sufficiency and reduce out-of-area placements.
- A small-scale home aligns with the objective of maintaining a domestic character and minimising impacts, consistent with policy expectations for care uses in residential areas.

(This section can be strengthened further if you provide any anonymised commissioning correspondence or if the Council's officer report lists specific URNs/homes used in their own evidence base.)

7. Alternative Site Review (High-level)

Appropriate children's residential provision generally requires:

- a domestic building form (non-institutional),
- adequate internal layout for bedrooms and staff facilities,
- safe and supervised external amenity space,
- access to schools, healthcare and local services, and
- the ability to operate with controlled visits, safeguarding and neighbour liaison.

Given constraints on suitable property availability, reuse of an existing dwelling that can meet the operational model is a common and practical delivery route for small children's homes. **13 Norwich Road** is a domestic property capable of conversion to a compliant C2 operational environment, subject to management controls and supporting technical submissions.

8. Benefits of the Proposal

BENEFIT AREA	BENEFIT
SOCIAL	Delivers up to 4 local placements , supporting stability and continuity of care
EDUCATION/HEALTH ACCESS	Improves ability for children to remain closer to schools, health services and support networks
ECONOMIC	Reduces reliance on expensive out-of-borough placements and associated travel burdens

COMMUNITY/AMENITY	Ofsted-regulated, supervised use with enforceable controls via OMP
POLICY ALIGNMENT	Supports specialist accommodation objectives where need exists and impacts are managed

9. Planning Balance

9.1 Key considerations

Loss of C3 dwelling (DMH1):

- The proposal would remove one dwelling from general housing supply. This is acknowledged and must be given weight.

Public benefit and need (DMH8 / London Plan H12 / NPPF):

- The Borough's evidenced placement sufficiency pressures and reliance on out-of-borough placements demonstrate a material need for additional local residential capacity.
- The proposal delivers 4 placements in a managed, domestic-scale form, with strong regulatory oversight.

Amenity and operational controls:

- Any potential impacts are capable of being controlled through a secured OMP (quiet hours, visitor booking, staff supervision, complaints protocol, garden hour controls) and supporting technical submissions (transport/parking strategy; noise mitigation if required).

9.2 Overall planning conclusion

When balancing the loss of one C3 dwelling against the substantial social infrastructure benefit of delivering essential children's residential care provision, and given that impacts can be mitigated and conditioned, the planning balance supports approval.

10. Conclusion and Recommendation

This report demonstrates that:

- There is a clear and evidenced need for children's residential placements within Hillingdon, with significant reliance on out-of-borough placements.
- Existing provision is structurally constrained (often small-unit capacity), supporting the case that additional domestic-scale provision is required.

- The proposed C2 home at **13 Norwich Road** would deliver **up to 4 Ofsted-regulated placements**, staffed 24/7, capable of being operated without unacceptable impacts through enforceable management controls.

Recommendation:

Planning permission should be granted, subject to conditions securing:

- maximum number of children (4),
- the Operational Management Plan (final and enforceable),
- controlled visiting / staffing / neighbour liaison procedures, and
- any technical mitigation required by the LPA (transport/parking and noise, if requested).