

Land to the East of Back Lane, Aston – Proposal by Oxfordshire County Council to Construct a Children’s Residential Care Home

Questions and Answers

The following is a series of questions and answers that pick up on the various issues that have been raised during the public consultation events on Sunday 13th September and Monday 14th September. If you have any further questions please feel free to contact Bluestone Planning on info@bluestoneplanning.co.uk and we will endeavour to respond to your question quickly.

Why have you chosen this site?

The site was selected as one of several sites following a detailed search exercise which looked at over 800 parcels of land and properties owned by Oxfordshire County Council. The long list of sites was narrowed down to a shorter list of approximately 60 locations and then refined further to a shortlist of approximately 10 sites. The Service then considered each of those sites in light of the particular needs of the children the home would be catering for, and settled on land at Back Lane Aston.

What level of traffic generation will the development produce?

There will be a maximum of four staff on site at any one time during the day and two at night. For robustness, it is assumed that four staff will arrive at the site during the AM peak period between 08:00-09:00 and four will depart during the PM peak period between 17:00-18:00. In reality, the forecast vehicle trip generation is likely to be more staggered as staff will work shifts. Visitors for residents are expected mainly in the evening and at weekends.

How will the development impact on Back Lane which is already too narrow?

Back Lane will be widened in the vicinity of the site in order to provide for an appropriate entrance to the home. The access will be set back, allowing appropriate visibility splays to be provided. Although the widening of Back Lane will only be localised, in the immediate vicinity of the new home, the widening will have a wider benefit to users of Back Lane by providing an area where vehicles can pass more easily if they meet.

What facilities will the resident children use in the local area?

The children will use local facilities in much the same way as the children who already live in Aston do. This may be in the form of local clubs, sports facilities and schools, as well as services and facilities in Witney (eg the leisure centre, shops, cinema etc).

Will children use public transport to get to school?

Transport to school will be a mixture, dependant upon the age and needs of the child in question e.g. school vs college, just like the other children whom reside in the village. Some may be by public transport, some by private transport.

How will you stop the children causing trouble locally? What will you do if they do?

The children who will be living in the home will be no different to the children in any village. Where there are issues the County Council will manage the behaviour of children in their care as any responsible parent would do, and will liaise with those affected to ensure that the matter is satisfactorily addressed.

What kind of children will live in the home?

The children who will live in this home may come from all sorts of different backgrounds, but a few things that will be common to all are that they have expressed a desire to live in a rural or quiet location, or have specifically expressed that they do not feel a fostering household is in their best interest. Likewise, they may be children who's care assessment indicates that they are likely to benefit from living in a rural location where there is a slower pace of life where they are most likely to grow and thrive.

Is this simply the first stage in opening the door to future development on the field?

There are no plans to develop the rest of the field for any form of development. This home has been designed following extensive consultation with children who are cared for in Oxfordshire in order to understand what type of living environment they need in order to thrive. It is not a model of living accommodation that would work as well if enlarged, and therefore it will remain at the size shown. For good reasons (e.g. safeguarding), allowing further development beyond the home on the rest of the field would undermine the objective of providing a quiet, rural setting for the home.

How is the proposed development to be landscaped?

Whilst there will be some removal of vegetation to provide the new access with good visibility on Back Lane, for highway safety reasons, this will be restricted to the area immediately to either side of the new entrance.

New landscape planting will be provided to the south of the home to provide screening between the home and the nearest dwelling to the south. Following

consultation feedback it is also likely that additional planting will be provided on the eastern side of the development. Additional planting will be provided in the rear garden.

The water pressure is already bad in Back Lane. How will the development avoid making the existing situation worse?

Where there are pre-existing issues with pressure, improvements may need to be undertaken to the infrastructure in Back Lane. This will be determined at the planning application stage.

What will day-to-day life be like for the children in the new home?

The life for children in the new home will be much the same as it might be in other family homes in the village. Children will attend school (usually one of the local schools) and will have to do their homework, help with the cooking, dog-walking, cleaning etc in much the same way as most children have to in their homes. The objective will be to enable them to integrate into the local community as much as possible, and this will be made easier by the fact that they will generally stay at the home for longer periods (e.g. 2+ years).

Has the County Council developed other homes like this elsewhere in the County?

Yes the County Council has developed other residential care homes for children elsewhere in Oxfordshire. One other home has been built on the edge of a rural settlement, but no two homes are exactly the same as each home caters for a specific group of children.

What is the programme for the project, moving forward?

The intention is to seek pre-application advice from the local planning authority next, and this is expected to be received within 6 to 8 weeks. Thereafter a decision will be taken about whether to proceed to a planning application. If the decision is to go ahead, then an application will be submitted towards the end of this year. A start on site would then be programmed to follow in the second quarter of 2021 with a finish on site planned for the end of 2021.

The trees on Back Lane are critical to the countryside feel of the area. Will this development result in the loss of vegetation on the Lane?

As noted above, whilst there will be some removal of vegetation to provide the new access with good visibility on Back Lane, for highway safety reasons, this will be

restricted to the local area to either side of the new entrance. New planting will be provided; it is likely to include planting along the rear of the visibility splays to replace the section of hedgerow that will need to be removed to facilitate the new access.

How will construction traffic and deliveries be routed?

Construction traffic will be routed to avoid unnecessary impacts on the village. Where it can be delivered from the north it is likely that this will be the route. There may be occasions where deliveries or contractor's plant needs to arrive from the south and if so then the developer will provide sufficient notification to the community, whether that be through a notice board, emails or a liaison group.

Are the community able to offer support to the children in the home?

Emphatically, yes. Subject to appropriate checks, the County Council welcomes the local community into it's homes in order to work with the children, to help them with life skills, to carry out activities like baking etc. These relationships with the local community are highly valuable to the children in the County Council's care.

The foul drainage is at capacity in Aston and Back Lane, is your development likely to cause further issues?

Where there are pre-existing issues with drainage, improvements may need to be undertaken locally. The need for this will be determined through consultation with the statutory authority at the planning application stage.