

Planning Statement

94 Bouverie Road West, Folkestone, CT20 2PP

Change of use from care home to single dwellinghouse

Planning Portal Reference: PP-14355006

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1. Introduction

This planning statement is to support the planning application to Folkestone and Hythe District Council for the change of use of Ashwest House, 94 Bouverie Road West, Folkestone, from a care home (C2) to a single dwellinghouse (C3). [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] purchased the property at auction on 16th April 2024 and would like to turn its use back to a single dwellinghouse to live in as their family home [REDACTED].

In this statement, we set out and examine the key planning considerations, including a description of the site, its planning history, the relevant policy context, and details of the proposed change of use. We also identify the main planning issues and provide conclusions in support of the proposal.

2. Site and Location

Bouverie Road West is a primarily residential street located immediately to the north of the A259 Sandgate Road, running parallel to it. Situated on the western side of Folkestone, this part of the town began to develop in the late nineteenth century. The area is characterised by substantial residential properties, including large houses and mansion blocks, which contribute to its distinct architectural character.

Site Location Plan

The properties along the section of Bouverie Road West between Grimstone Avenue to the west and Earl's Avenue to the east, within which the application site is located, are predominantly of early 20th-century construction. Although there is some variation in architectural style, the northern side of the road where the property is located is all similarly scaled three storey semi-detached houses, mainly constructed from red stock brickwork with tiled roofs. The street presents as a generously proportioned boulevard, flanked on both sides by broad pavements that accommodate mature tree planting. A substantial grass verge lines the northern edge, where the property is located. The area is distinctly residential in nature, characterised by a leafy, boulevard-style street scene.

Photo 1: No.94 Bouverie Road West from the front



Number 94 was developed in 1900 and is a three-storey property adjoined to Number 96. It has a basement below ground level. It was constructed as a single residential dwelling. There is a small garden to the rear, with patio and lawn. The fire escape at the

rear was added in the 1980s. There are no trees within the site, although there is a large sycamore tree in the rear garden of Number 92 that overhangs across the application site.

Photo 2: No.94 Bouverie Road West from the rear



Photo 3: No.94 Bouverie Road West rear garden



The siting of the property follows the building line found along the street and the height and style of the property is similar to the other buildings. At the front of the property, there is a small lawned garden with shrubs and a low wall separating the property from the pavement. Since the property was acquired by the current owners in May 2024, repair work has been done to make the property watertight and prevent further deterioration.

The application site is situated near the western edge of Folkestone's defined town centre, as set out in the adopted development plan. The designated town centre boundary extends westward along Bouverie Road West, terminating at the junction with Manor Road, approximately 800 metres east of the site. As such, the full range of town centre services and amenities remains easily accessible.

The site benefits from excellent connectivity to public transport infrastructure. It lies within walking distance of both the Bouverie Square bus station (approximately 900 metres east) and Folkestone Central Railway Station (approximately 1 kilometre to the north-east). In closer proximity, bus stops are located on Sandgate Road at distances of approximately 290 metres (westbound) and 365 metres (eastbound).

Beyond town centre provision, the local area offers a range of community and educational facilities. Sandgate Primary School is located nearby on Cooling Lane, while Sandgate Road Surgery is also within close reach. A children's day nursery is situated in Westbourne Gardens, and leisure and recreational opportunities are available along Sandgate Road and The Leas.

The site is considered to occupy a highly sustainable location, with on-street parking available in the immediate vicinity. It falls within the Folkestone Leas and Bayle Conservation Area, although there are no listed buildings adjacent to the site. The surrounding area is identified as having potential for palaeolithic archaeological interest. Furthermore, the site lies within Flood Zone 1, denoting land at the lowest risk of flooding.

3. Planning and Use History

Construction of 94 Bouverie Road West was completed in 1900. Originally used as a single dwelling, it was converted to a care home in the 1980s.

Planning permission was approved with conditions to convert the property into 3 separate flats in October 1977 under reference SH/77/866. This conversion never took place. The change of use from residential to use as a care home for the elderly was approved in October 1981 under reference SH/81/876. In 1987 it was allowed to also be a care home for the mentally ill. Since then, the erection of the fire escape to the rear was approved in May 1984 under reference SH/84/362, and the extension of the fire escape to serve the second floor was approved with conditions in September 1991 under reference 91/0654/SH.

The property was last used as a residential care home with up to 7 bedrooms, known as Ashwest House, owned and run by Allied Care Ltd. It is believed that it was most recently used to provide residential care for those with learning disabilities.

4. Proposal

The application seeks to convert the use of 94 Bouverie Road West from a care home (C2) back to a single dwellinghouse (C3), to be used as a family home.

No alterations are planned to the exterior or to the internal layout.

5. Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in July 2021, places a central emphasis on the ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’. This principle underpins the expectation that development proposals which align with the development plan should be approved without delay (paragraph 11).

Where relevant policies are deemed out of date, the NPPF clearly states that planning permission should be granted unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the Framework as a whole, or where specific policies indicate that development should be restricted.

Paragraph 38 encourages Local Planning Authorities to adopt a positive and creative approach to decision-making, with a clear directive to approve sustainable development proposals wherever possible. In line with paragraph 47, planning law requires that decisions on planning applications be made in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise, and that such decisions should be reached promptly.

The NPPF strongly supports the delivery of a sufficient supply of housing. Paragraph 60 reinforces the Government’s objective to significantly boost housing provision, ensuring that a sufficient quantity and diversity of land is made available where needed, and that the needs of specific housing groups are met. Paragraph 69 highlights the important contribution of small and medium-sized sites to meeting local housing needs, with an expectation that at least 10% of housing requirements be delivered on sites no larger than one hectare.

Paragraph 119 promotes the efficient use of land to meet housing and other development needs, with a particular emphasis on maximising the use of previously developed land. Paragraph 120(c) further supports the remediation and appropriate reuse of derelict land.

Sustainable transport is a key consideration under paragraph 110, with development expected to prioritise pedestrian and cycle movement, cater to the needs of disabled people, and create safe, secure, and attractive environments (paragraph 112).

Finally, the NPPF promotes the delivery of high-quality, beautiful, and sustainable buildings and places (paragraph 126), and requires that landscape and biodiversity considerations be fully addressed, with appropriate weight given to their impacts and benefits (paragraph 174 onwards).

Local Plan

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that a planning application must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The applicable development plan for the site consists of the Folkestone & Hythe District Council Core Strategy Review (2022), adopted on 30 March 2022, and the Places and Policies Local Plan, adopted on 16 September 2020.

Core Strategy Review 2022

The District Spatial Strategy, as set out in the Core Strategy Review (CSR) 2022, identifies Folkestone as the district's largest settlement and principal centre for economic and commercial activity. Table 4.4 of the CSR designates Folkestone as a Sub-regional Town, expected to accommodate substantial levels of residential, commercial, and social development. The spatial strategy promotes the regeneration of Folkestone's town centre, employment areas, and disadvantaged neighbourhoods, with a focus on enhancing connectivity, vibrancy, and activity. This is to be driven by major redevelopment opportunities on brownfield land, notably at Folkestone Seafront and Shorncliffe Garrison, alongside improvements to existing housing, retail, and commercial stock.

Folkestone is therefore recognised as playing a pivotal role in delivering a significant proportion of the district's overall development needs, particularly in relation to housing provision.

Policies SS1 and SS3 form the foundation of the district's spatial strategy. Policy SS1 specifically states that:

Elsewhere in the district, priority will continue to be given to previously developed land in the Urban Area in Folkestone, for main town centre uses and housing, to enhance the town's role as a sub-regional centre, with opportunity for increased densities within the town centre and maximisation of employment opportunities at key locations.

In this context, the strategic priorities for urban centres such as Folkestone are defined as follows:

The future spatial priority for new development in the Urban Area (Folkestone and Hythe) is on promoting the development of vacant previously developed land, central Folkestone and the north of the town, and other locations within walking distance of Folkestone Central railway station

Policy SS3 sets out a requirement for development to safeguard and enhance the natural environment, while also contributing to local place-shaping priorities that foster vibrant and inclusive communities. The proposed scheme is considered to align with the overarching aims and objectives of this policy.

Under Policy SS2, the district is expected to deliver 13,284 new homes over the plan period from 2019/20 to 2036/37, structured across four phases. Specifically, during the period 2024/25 to 2028/29, the plan identifies an annual delivery target of 885 dwellings. The Core Strategy Review (CSR) further anticipates that windfall sites will contribute 1,235 dwellings toward this total, based on an annual allowance of 95 units over a 13-year period.

Places and Policies Local Plan (PPLP)

Part One of the PPLP (adopted September 2020) identifies the urban areas of Folkestone and Hythe as being the prime locations for accommodating new development. The urban area would be expected to provide significant windfall development.

Policy HB11 in the PPLP sets out provisions relating to the potential loss of residential care homes and institutions. The policy states:

Planning permission will be granted for the conversion of a residential care home or institution (C2) to residential (C3), hotel or bed and breakfast (C1) or non-residential institution (D1) use, or the demolition of the building or buildings and new build development for these uses, if the following are satisfied:

- 1. The applicant has provided a viability report demonstrating that:
 - i. A residential care or institutional use in the current building is not economically sustainable;*
 - ii. Extension or adaption is not viable; and*
 - iii. The property has been actively marketed at a reasonable rate for a period of at least 12 months and no reasonable offers have been made;**
- 2. Design and layout take account of the design and sustainable construction policies within this plan, as far as is reasonably practical;*
- 3. It can be demonstrated that levels of traffic movements can be successfully accommodated on the local road network and that parking can be provided in accordance with the requirements of Policy T2;*
- 4. Development does not result in increased noise or disturbance which impacts on neighbouring residential amenity; and*

5. In the case of redevelopment for residential (C3) use, the development provides affordable housing in accordance with Core Strategy Policy CSD1: Balanced Neighbourhoods. The Council will resist the demolition of a residential care home or institution that is a heritage asset or where the building is within a Conservation Area.

Section 9.28 of the PPLP, under Internal and External Space Standards outlines the benefits of having adequate space for families. The plan states:

Inadequate space within homes is an issue of increasing importance to home buyers. The former Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) produced a report, 'Space standards: the benefits' (2010) which summarised the seven main benefits of sufficient internal space as:

- *Improved health and wellbeing resulting from privacy and social activity;*
- *Enhanced family life and the opportunity for children to study uninterrupted;*
- *Opportunities for home working, increased productivity and therefore wider economic benefit;*
- *Increased flexibility and adaptability to changing needs;*
- *The ability to respond to occupants' changing physical requirements over their lifetimes;*
- *Reduced overcrowding; and*
- *A more stable housing market driven by an understanding of long-term need rather than short-term investment.*

Policy T5 requires one cycle parking space per bedroom to be provided for individual residential developments.

Policy NE2 of the PPLP sets out biodiversity requirements. Finally, policy CC1 addresses the need to reduce carbon emissions.

6. Planning Benefits

The purpose of this section is to set out the benefits of the proposals in relation to heritage, social, economic and environmental aspects.

Heritage Benefits

The conversion of the property from a commercial care home to a residential property will benefit the conservation area due to the better expected maintenance of a heritage Victorian building. Past use as a care home has seen the property be neglected due to the running costs of maintaining such an old building. As a single dwellinghouse, the owners will have more incentive to invest money in the maintenance of this heritage building.

Social and Economic Benefits

The provision of an additional family home will be welcomed in the area, where most of the properties have been converted to small flats that are unsuitable for families. There is a need for spacious family homes in the district. Section 9.28 of the Places and Policies Local Plan outlines the benefits of having adequate space for families, including improved health and wellbeing resulting from privacy and social activities, ability for children to study uninterrupted, and the ability for parents to work from home, which increases productivity and benefits the economy.

The conversion of the property from a care home to a residential property will involve renovating the interior of the building, which will provide employment opportunities locally. The dwelling will provide accommodation for economically active individuals, thereby contributing to overall household spending within the local economy. This increased expenditure is anticipated to generate indirect economic benefits, including the support and stimulation of local employment opportunities.

Environmental Benefits

The proposed development secures a productive new use for a building that otherwise would be vacant, representing a more environmentally sustainable approach than full site redevelopment. Retaining and repurposing the existing structure minimises resource consumption and construction waste, aligning with principles of sustainable development.

The site itself holds limited ecological value in its current state; however, the proposal presents an opportunity to introduce biodiversity enhancements within the garden.

7. Planning Considerations

The key considerations outlined in this report are:

- Need for the Development
- Appropriateness of Location
- Loss of the Care Home Use
- Character and Appearance
- Residential Amenity and Noise
- Parking and Highways
- Drainage and Flood Risk
- Ecology
- Air Quality
- Heritage Impact
- Consultation with those potentially impacted

Need for the Development

As previously outlined in this statement, the Core Strategy Review (CSR) highlights a substantial requirement for new residential development to address the district's housing needs over the course of the Local Plan period, in line with strategic policies SS1 and SS3. The ongoing demand for additional housing across the district remains evident, underscoring the necessity of delivering new dwellings to meet the evolving needs of the local population.

There is an additional need to ensure that the heritage building is being maintained within the conservation area. In its recent history as a care home, the building was not well maintained.

Appropriateness of Location

The application site comprises a building that is no longer fit for its lawful use as a care home. In accordance with the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the optimal use of land and existing built assets is encouraged. The proposed conversion to a residential dwelling represents the most appropriate and sustainable reuse of the site, consistent with its context and planning objectives.

The site is located within an established residential area and benefits from excellent accessibility to a wide range of town centre services and amenities, all within walking distance. Public transport connectivity is strong, with nearby bus stops on Sandgate Road and a bus station located at Bouverie Square. Further transport links are available via Folkestone Central Railway Station, also within walking distance of the site. Local

medical provision is readily accessible, with Sandgate Road Surgery situated in close proximity.

Loss of the Care Home Use

Policy HB11 aims to protect care home use; however, its application must be considered within the broader context, as outlined in the PPLP. Paragraph 9.78 of the PPLP specifically highlights the challenges faced by smaller care homes in the district. It recognises that, in cases where upgrading facilities is not financially viable, alternative uses for such premises will need to be explored:

However, with the changing nature of the industry and the requirement for improved service provision and for larger sites to increase the viability of businesses, the Council anticipates significant changes in the building stock over the plan period. It is expected that larger Victorian properties that have so far supported residential care in the district will become too costly to reconfigure to modern standards, and that these will be brought forward for conversion or redevelopment for other uses.

Policy HB11 is not intended to prevent the closure of smaller care homes, but rather to guide and manage such transitions. Ashwest House, comprising only seven bedrooms, falls significantly below the district's average care home capacity of 27 bed spaces—a figure which, as noted in paragraph 9.79 of the PPLP, is itself considered modest. Paragraphs 9.82 and 9.83 of the PPLP explicitly acknowledge that where care homes cannot be feasibly upgraded to meet contemporary standards, alternative uses must be considered. In this context, it is entirely foreseeable that a facility such as Ashwest House would be unable to meet current requirements. Accordingly, the loss of this care home is viewed as a reasonable and expected outcome. Nonetheless, it is accepted that the provisions of Policy HB11, particularly in evidencing this position, must be robustly addressed.

Policy HB11 only supports the change of use from a care home to residential use (C3) where it has been demonstrated that;

- i. A residential care or institutional use in the current building is not economically sustainable;*
- ii. Extension or adaption is not viable;*
- iii. and the property has been actively marketed at a reasonable rate for a period of at least 12 months and no reasonable offers have been made*

Use of current building

In order to properly address this matter, it is important to consider the broader factors that have contributed to the closure of Ashwest House and numerous other small nursing homes across the country. Over the past 15 years, significant efforts have been

made to enhance the quality of accommodation within the care sector. This has included the introduction of legislative requirements concerning room sizes, shared accommodation, supporting facilities, and staffing ratios. Additionally, the obligation to undergo regular inspections by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), and to implement any improvements identified through those inspections, has placed considerable pressure on operators—particularly those of smaller facilities.

In many cases, these homes have been unable to meet the evolving standards or to justify the financial investment required to do so, rendering continued operation economically unviable. While a CQC inspection report for Ashwest House is not available, Allied Care have confirmed to the current owners that the reason for closure was the unviability of the business, based on the small number of residents and the extensive upgrades needed to the period property. Any such improvements would have been essential to maintain registration and ensure compliance, yet the limited revenue generated by a facility housing only a small number of residents made such investment impractical. This is further evidenced by the fact that the owner of the freehold at the adjoining 96 Bouverie Road West notified the current owners that he paid for the full works to clear the valley between the two properties, which had been blocked and was causing significant water penetration into both roofs. Allied Care chose not to pay towards the works, further indicating that paying towards upkeep of the old building was not commensurate with running the care home as a business. Allied Care Ltd are an experienced residential care provider, with 36 sites currently, according to their website; this indicates that they have considerable experience in running viable businesses on other sites and would know when a site was unviable.

Extension or adaptation

The building is a period property with a small back garden in a residential area (see site plan and photos). There is therefore no opportunity for extension of the building. In addition, section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended, requires that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area. This property falls within the Folkestone Leas and Bayle Conservation Area and therefore any extension to the building would detract from the character and appearance of the conservation area, also making it not viable.

Marketing of the property as a care home

The independent valuation and marketing report submitted with the application, undertaken by Motis Estates, provides an up-to date valuation of the property, as a care home. Motis Estates calculated the expected market value of the property as a care home to be £550,000, as of October 2024, based on an analysis of the rate per sq ft of commercial space including other care homes in the Folkestone area. They marketed the property for commercial use for over 12 months (14th October 2024 to 20th October

2025), with no interest from purchasers to take the property forward as a care home. The independent marketing report developed by Motis Estates states that:

It is felt that as the property has been marketed since 14th October 2024 on Motis Estates Website and 18th October 2024 on Property Portals for commercial purposes and there has been no suitable purchasers then the owner should consider alternate planning uses...In our opinion the property is no longer suited for C2 use due to the building having accessibility issues, no lift, lack of parking in the area and the building being located within predominately a residential area.

The fact that the marketing has elicited no interest from buyers wishing to bring it forward for C2 commercial use indicates that there was no demand to continue to use the premises as a nursing home.

Conclusion on loss of care home

The evolving expectations around care home standards—both in terms of facilities and quality of care—mean that converted period buildings such as Ashwest House are no longer considered suitable or viable for modern care provision. Purpose-built facilities, such as the Folkestone Care Centre on Shorncliffe Road, which accommodates 110 residents in individual rooms with en-suite facilities, represent a more economically sustainable model for operators. This shift has led to a marked decline in demand for older, smaller care homes housed in converted properties.

This diminishing demand is evidenced by the fact that Ashwest House has been actively marketed as a care home for a period of 12 months, yet has attracted no interest from care providers. Smaller care homes consistently face challenges in meeting the required standards, and as such, there is little to no market appetite for their continued use. In this context, safeguarding such premises under Policy HB11 cannot be reasonably justified.

Character and Appearance

The appearance of the application site when it was being run as a care home detracted from the overall amenity of the local area, as it was unmaintained and unkempt. Since it was purchased by the current owners in May 2024, work has been done to make the building water-tight and prevent further deterioration of the stonework. This shows how residential owners would maintain the exterior of the building to a much better standard than a care home provider would be able to afford to. This is particularly important due to the site being located in a conservation area.

Residential Amenity and Noise

The proposal will introduce further residential use into a predominantly residential area.

The total number of residents of the property is expected to decrease. When used as a supported living facility/care home, the property had 7 bedrooms. There also would have been staff and healthcare providers on site intermittently. Additionally, neighbours have provided reports of noise and antisocial behaviour from the residents of the assisted living facility (see section on Consultation with Those Potentially Impacted). The proposed use as a family home is likely to reduce the noise associated with usage. The building footprint and appearance will remain as it currently is, as the property is not being extended or altered on the exterior.

The pre-application advice report stated:

In relation to amenity, the change of use is considered unlikely to have any discernible impact in relation to surrounding residential uses in relation to noise and disturbance, as the comings and goings from staff, visitors, healthcare professionals and deliveries are replaced with movements from occupants, visitors and domestic deliveries that would be associated with a residential use. The property is not proposed to be altered in any way, so there would be no detriment to residential amenity arising from overbearing presence, overshadowing, or loss of privacy as a consequence of the proposed change of use. The building is substantial and, together with the garden area, would meet the requirements for internal and external amenity standards as set out in adopted policy HB3.

Parking and Highways

The site's former use as a care home would likely have generated a higher volume of vehicular activity than its proposed residential use, due to regular movements associated with staff, professional services, and social visitors.

The use as a family home would consist of a household with 2 cars. The town centre is within close proximity, with a wide range of services and amenities easily reached on foot. In addition, public transport connections are excellent, with the bus station nearby and the mainline railway station just a short walk away.

The proposed use is not anticipated to give rise to adverse impacts on parking provision, highway safety, or the amenity of neighbouring properties. Furthermore, it is not considered to have any material effect on the adjoining highway. The pre-application advice reports states that: *The nature of the proposal means that there would likely be a reduction in parking requirement, based on the outgoing commercial use.*

The guidelines for care homes require 1 space per resident staff, 1 space per 2 other staff, as well as 1 space visitor parking per 6 beds. The exact levels of staffing when Ashwest House was being run as a care home are unknown, but it is anticipated that for this 7 bedroom care home a minimum of 3 parking permits would have been required as

the property does not have on-site parking. For the proposed residential use, a 4+ bed house is required to have 2 spaces per unit and 0.2 space visitor parking, making the parking requirements likely less than the care home use.

The basement will be used as a secure, covered storage area for bicycles, which can easily accommodate up to 10 bicycles.

Drainage and Flood Risk

The application site lies within Flood Zone 1, indicating land at the lowest risk of flooding. Both foul and surface water drainage will be managed through the existing on-site infrastructure, and no significant concerns have been identified that would necessitate further detailed assessment.

Ecology

The proposed change of use will not directly affect or reduce the ecological impact of the site. In fact, it may offer opportunities to enhance the ecological impact, as the owners plan to install bird boxes and plant a wildflower border in the rear garden.

Air Quality

Given that no redevelopment of the property is being proposed, the change of use is not considered to raise any substantive issues regarding air quality. The site is not located within an area that has been identified as experiencing significant air quality concerns. The expected reduced traffic associated with the change of use will, if anything, reduce potential for air pollution in the vicinity.

Heritage Impact

As addressed above, the proposal will have a positive impact on the character and setting of the Conservation Area. No further building work is planned, so the proposal is unlikely to raise any requirement for further archaeological investigation.

Consultation with Those Potentially Impacted

The current owners of 94 Bouverie Road West have consulted with the residents from the following flats either side of the property:

- Flat A, 92 Bouverie Road West
- Flat B, 92 Bouverie Road West
- Flat B, 96 Bouverie Road West
- Flat C, 96 Bouverie Road West (previous tenant consulted)
- Owner of freehold 96 Bouverie Road West

All the residents and the landlord were very supportive of the plans to turn the property from a care home into a family home. One person reported problems with the care

home residents, including antisocial behaviour and police visits. One resident commented that this conversion would also mean that the property would be kept in better repair.

8. Conclusion

The proposal to change the legal use of 94 Bouverie Road West from a care home to residential use will positively contribute to the provision of family housing to meet the needs of the district. The proposal will also deliver a number of economic benefits; it will provide employment for local tradesmen as the interior is renovated and the house will accommodate economically active people.

The proposal would bring a property that was originally used as a residential property back to its former use. The application site is situated in a highly sustainable and predominantly residential location, within convenient walking distance of the town centre and associated services. The proposed development will positively contribute to the visual amenity of the surrounding area by reactivating a currently underutilised building, thereby halting its ongoing physical decline. The proposal will have no unacceptable impact on townscape, parking provision, designated heritage assets, or local ecological habitats.

This report has demonstrated that small care homes in Victorian buildings are unsustainable as businesses, that the property cannot be extended or adapted, and that the property has been marketed as a care home for 12 months with no interest from any buyers for this use.

In summary, it is considered that the application is fully consistent with national and local planning policy. As a consequence, and all of the benefits highlighted above, the proposal for change of use should be granted planning permission.