

Planning Statement

Retrospective Change of Use – Residential Dwelling (Use Class C3) to Mixed C3/Childminding Use

51 Fish Dam Lane, Monk Bretton, Barnsley S71 2PY

Applicants: Mr Ross & Mrs Lucy Bennett

1. Introduction

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a retrospective planning application for the operation of a small-scale childminding business from the dwelling at 51 Fish Dam Lane, Monk Bretton, Barnsley.

The proposal seeks consent for a mixed residential / childminding use of the property. The dwelling remains the principal residence of Mr and Mrs Bennett, with childminding activities operating within clearly defined hours and spaces and at a modest scale which is compatible with the residential character of the area.

The statement explains how the use operates, the physical alterations carried out, and how issues of highway safety, parking and residential amenity (including noise) are carefully managed.

2. Site and Surroundings

51 Fish Dam Lane is a two-storey semi-detached dwelling on the corner of Fish Dam Lane and Bentley Close, within an established residential area of Monk Bretton. The property benefits from:

- A front driveway accessed from Bentley Close, capable of accommodating two vehicles clear of the highway.
- A long rear garden running parallel with Bentley Close, containing a former detached garage toward the rear boundary.

The surrounding area is characterised by similar residential properties. There are no listed buildings or conservation area designations affecting the site.

3. Description of the Use

3.1 Ofsted registration, staffing and numbers

The childminding business is Ofsted-registered and operated by:

- Lead childminders:
 - Mrs Lucy Bennett – Ofsted No. 2822665
 - Ms Caitlan King – Ofsted No. 2817579
- Assistant: one apprentice under 18 (Ella Brown).

The business cares for a maximum of 9 children at any one time. This is below the theoretical Ofsted capacity for the two registered childminders, which would enable a greater number of children. The applicants have consciously chosen to operate below that threshold in order to minimise any potential impact on neighbours.

3.2 Hours of operation

Opening hours are:

- Monday to Friday – 07:30 to 18:00

There is no operation on weekends or bank holidays. Outdoor activity is more restricted than the overall opening hours (see Section 6).

3.3 Areas used for childminding

Childminding activities are confined to specific parts of the property as shown on the submitted floor plans:

- Internal areas
 - The former garage in the rear garden, now converted to a dedicated childminding room.
 - A ground-floor WC within the dwelling.
 - The ground-floor lounge is occasionally used as a quiet / nap room.
- External areas
 - A defined outdoor play area toward the rear of the garden, enclosed by internal fencing and existing boundary treatments.

The remainder of the dwelling, upper floors and parts of the garden continue to be used as the applicant's private home.

3.4 Nature of activities

Activities are typical of a small-scale childminding setting: supervised play, arts and crafts, reading, outdoor play, napping and regular off-site outings to local parks and play centres. Children are frequently taken out in small groups during the day, which further limits the number of children on site at any one time.

4. Physical Alterations

The following minor alterations have been undertaken:

1. Garage conversion
 - The existing detached garage in the rear garden has been converted to a single-storey childminding room. Works comprised:
 - Installation of new windows and doors.

- Internal plastering and insulation.
 - Internal fit-out as a playroom.
 - The structure remains in its original position and footprint; there has been no increase in height or bulk.
2. Internal garden fencing
- A low 3ft (approx. 0.9m) fence has been installed within the garden to create a defined, secure play area for children, set away from neighbouring boundaries.
3. Replacement boundary fencing
- Existing boundary fencing has been replaced on a like-for-like basis due to age and to improve privacy, including:
 - Approximately 2.1m (6–7ft) fencing along the side and rear boundaries.
 - Retention of a 3m tall mature hedge along the boundary with the nearest neighbour, supplemented by the neighbour's own 5ft fence.

All changes are modest in scale and domestic in appearance and do not materially alter the character of the property or street scene.

5. Access, Parking and Highway Considerations

Access is taken from Bentley Close via the existing driveway. The operation has been designed to ensure that:

- The driveway accommodates two vehicles off-street, used for:
 - Staff parking for the childminders.
 - Drop-off and pick-up for parents arriving by car.
- The majority of families walk to the property due to its local catchment.
- For those that drive:
 - Drop-off and pick-up times are staggered so that typically only one parent vehicle is present at any one time, with a maximum of two vehicles for very short periods.
 - Typical dwell time is around 5 minutes.
 - Parents are instructed to use the driveway rather than parking on Fish Dam Lane or the side street, avoiding obstruction or congestion.

The arrangement is clearly shown on the submitted proposed block plan, which identifies separate areas for childminder parking and parent drop-off within the curtilage.

Given the modest number of children, the staggered pattern of arrivals and the availability of on-site parking, the proposal does not give rise to any unacceptable impact on highway safety or on-street parking conditions.

6. Residential Amenity and Noise Management

Protecting the amenity of neighbours has been a key consideration in how the business is operated.

6.1 Outdoor play

- Outdoor play is limited to approximately one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon, and is weather-dependent.
- Children do not use the garden before 10:00 or after 16:00, ensuring quieter periods in the earlier morning and later afternoon / early evening.
- The outdoor play area is located at the rear end of the garden, away from neighbouring houses and Fish Dam Lane, reducing the perception of noise.

6.2 Boundary treatments and screening

- Along the boundary with the closest neighbouring garden there is a 3m high hedge, running almost the full length of the garden.
- On the neighbour's side of the hedge is a 5ft fence, and on the opposite side boundary to the other neighbour there is a 6ft fence.
- These combined physical features provide substantial visual and acoustic screening, helping to absorb and deflect sound from children playing.

6.3 Indoor noise management

- The converted garage is used as the primary playroom and has been insulated and sound-proofed. When in use, noise is not audible from outside the building under normal conditions.
- The lounge / nap room is used for quiet activities and rest, providing a calm space away from the main playroom when required.
- Children are often split into smaller groups, with some taken off-site for walks or outings while others remain inside, reducing the number of children in any one space.

6.4 Operational controls

The childminders implement several day-to-day measures to minimise disturbance:

- Use of positive reinforcement and ‘quiet time’ during the early and late parts of the day.
- Continuous adult supervision of outdoor play.
- Clear expectations set with parents regarding respectful behaviour at drop-off and pick-up, including not leaving engines idling and avoiding loud conversations at the boundary.

Taken together, these measures ensure that any noise associated with the use is intermittent, daytime in nature and comparable with normal family activity in a residential garden.

7. Planning Policy Context (summary)

While the detailed policy assessment will be carried out by the Local Planning Authority, the proposal is considered consistent with the broad aims of national and local planning policy, in particular:

- Supporting small-scale home-based businesses and childcare provision where impacts on neighbours and highway safety can be satisfactorily controlled.
- Making effective use of existing buildings and land without physical overdevelopment.
- Protecting residential amenity and ensuring development is compatible with the character of residential areas.

The use is of a limited scale, retains the dwelling as a family home, and is managed in a way that addresses the concerns raised by Planning Enforcement regarding noise, traffic and parking.

8. Planning History and Enforcement Context

Following a complaint from a neighbour, Barnsley Council’s Planning Enforcement team investigated the childminding use. The Council concluded that the scale of the activity exceeds the threshold that may be considered incidental to a dwellinghouse and requested the submission of a planning application with a supporting statement, particularly addressing:

- Staff numbers and hours of work.
- Number of children and hours of operation.
- Parking arrangements and staggered drop-off/pick-up times.
- Noise management and use of internal/external spaces.

This Planning Statement has been prepared specifically to respond to those requests and to demonstrate that the use can operate acceptably within the residential context.

9. Conclusion

This application seeks retrospective consent for a mixed C3 residential / childminding use at 51 Fish Dam Lane. The key points can be summarised as follows:

1. The business is small-scale and Ofsted-registered, with a maximum of 9 children, operated by two childminders and one apprentice.
2. The hours of operation are limited to weekdays, with outdoor play restricted to short, controlled periods in the middle of the day.
3. Physical alterations are modest: conversion of an existing detached garage to a playroom and the introduction of internal garden fencing and replacement boundary treatment, all domestic in character and not harmful to the street scene.
4. Parking and access are safely accommodated within the site, with staggered drop-off/pick-up and a driveway capable of taking two cars, significantly reducing any impact on the public highway.
5. Residential amenity is protected through restricted hours, screened and set-back play areas, sound-proofed indoor spaces and careful day-to-day management of children and parent arrivals.
6. The use remains intrinsically linked to the residential occupation of the dwelling, with the property continuing to function as the applicants' family home.

In light of the above, it is considered that the proposal represents an acceptable and sustainable form of development which accords with the objectives of the development plan and national policy. The Local Planning Authority is therefore respectfully requested to grant planning permission for the proposed mixed residential and childminding use.