

COMMITTEE REPORT

20250994	538 Saffron Lane	
Proposal:	Change of use from house (Class C3) to a residential family assessment centre (Sui Generis)	
Applicant:	Nexus Family Ltd	
App type:	Operational development - full application	
Status:	Change of use	
Expiry Date:	7 November 2025	
SPV	TEAM: PD	WARD: Saffron



Summary

- The application is being brought to the committee as the applicant is an employee of the council
- The proposal is the change of use of house to residential assessment centre
- The main issues are the principle of the use, the impact on noise and disturbance and highways.
- 4 letters of objection and a petition with 17 signatures have been submitted on the grounds of the impact on the local community and traffic concerns
- Recommendation of Conditional Approval

The Site

The application relates to a three-bedroom semi-detached house located in a residential area.

The house is located on Saffron Lane, which is a quality bus corridor and is directly opposed a pedestrian crossing, the other side of the road is a local shopping centre.

The property does not have off-street vehicular parking, and it would not be possible to achieve this given the proximity of the pedestrian crossing.

The house has a garden at the rear and a side access.

Background

The area was first developed for housing in the Interwar period, but this house and its neighbours were redeveloped in the mid-1980s.

The Proposal

Use

It is proposed to change the use of the house to a residential family assessment centre. It would be a facility where families, who have been referred by the local authority due to a child welfare concern can stay for a short period of time. During the stay they would be assessed by professionals to determine if it is safe for the family to remain together.

A maximum of two families, would be present in the property at any one time. The property would be staffed on a 24-hour basis by support workers on a rota, there would be a maximum of two support staff on site at any one time. Overnight, one waking night staff member will be on duty to provide care and supervision as needed.

The proposed use would be regulated by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and would operate in accordance with the Care Standards Act 2000, the Residential Family Centres Regulations 2002, and the National Minimum Standards for Residential Family Centres.

A registered manager would also be at the property from 08:00 to 17:00 Monday-Friday and alternate weekends.

Additional professional visitors – such as social workers, local authority officers, independent chairs, and those from Ofsted (annually) – would attend the property as required. Contact with residents' family and friends will not take place at the home; such contacts will be arranged via the social worker and in a safe and neutral environment.

Alterations

Internally, the existing through lounge on the ground floor would be subdivided to form a bedroom at the front of the property and a lounge at the rear, while the downstairs WC would be enlarged to form a shower room. Upstairs the layout would remain the same but the smaller rear bedroom would become an office. Sound insulation is proposed to be installed along the party wall with the adjoining house (540 Saffron Lane)

No external alterations are proposed

Amended plans were submitted to include the insulation and changes to the WC.

Policy Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024

Paragraphs 2 (Application determined in accordance with development plan and material considerations)

Paragraph 11 (Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development)

Paragraphs 44 (Sufficient information for good decision making)

Paragraph 57 (Six tests for planning conditions)

Paragraphs 116 and 117 (Highways impacts)

Paragraphs 135 and 139 (Good design and ensuring high standard of amenity)

Paragraph 187 (Noise and Pollution)

Paragraph 193 (Habitats and Biodiversity)

Development Plan Policies

Development plan policies relevant to this application are listed at the end of this report.

Representations

There have been letters of objection received from four city addresses as well as a petition against the proposal signed by 17 people.

The following points have been raised:

- The local community has many elderly residents making it unsuitable for vulnerable families.
- Negative impact on community cohesion and increased safety fears
- Increased pressure from traffic and parking in an area which experiences high levels of traffic and parking problems
- 24 Hour use would introduce disruption and parking issues all day
- Lack of consultation with the local community
- Negative impact on property values and the general character of the area.

Consultations

Environmental Health (noise) Team

Request a Noise Management Plan as the proposed use has the potential to generate more noise than a family house associated with increased occupancy and activity.

Local Highway Authority

Saffron Lane is a busy, classified road (B5366) subject to a 30mph speed limit. In the vicinity of the site the highway comprises a two-way single width carriageway with cycle lanes and wide footways on each side, part of which (adjacent to the carriageway and probably previously grass verge) is used for parking. It is not entirely clear whether this use is authorised, although the kerbs appear to be dropped and much of it is hard surfaced. Immediately in front of the application

site is a signalised pedestrian crossing. Bus routes, both orbital and into and from the city centre, run along Saffron Lane

There is no off-street parking associated with the property, however, the site is considered to be in a sustainable location with easy access to local services, facilities, amenities, and public transport routes, encouraging the use of sustainable modes of travel rather than depending on the private car.

The proposal is for the change of use of the existing dwelling to a residential family assessment centre whereby families would stay for a short period of time so that professionals can determine if it is safe for the family to remain together. According to the Supporting Statement, the property will remain as is with three bedrooms plus an office for staff. One member of staff would be on site at all times with a manager there during office hours and alternate weekends. Other professionals would also visit the site at intervals.

Bearing in mind the residential nature of the property as a three bedroom dwelling which could accommodate a couple and adult children, all of which drive, it is possible that a slight increase in the traffic generated could result from the proposed use, however, as stated above, the site is in a sustainable location with opportunities to use modes of transport other than the private car and, should an employee drive to the site, it would be difficult to demonstrate that the additional vehicle movements and demand for parking, relative to that of dwelling or that which currently occurs locally, would have a significant impact on existing highway conditions.

In light of the comments above, the Highway Authority does not raise any objections to the proposal.

Social Care Department

Family Assessment Centres usually have one or two parents and a relatively small baby, in this case the plan is for two of these. Stays are limited to 12-24 weeks in most cases. There is a growing need for these centres as the Family Courts are requesting more residential assessments. The provider is well established in this field. There is a low risk of anti-social behaviour from these types of units.

No Objections

Consideration

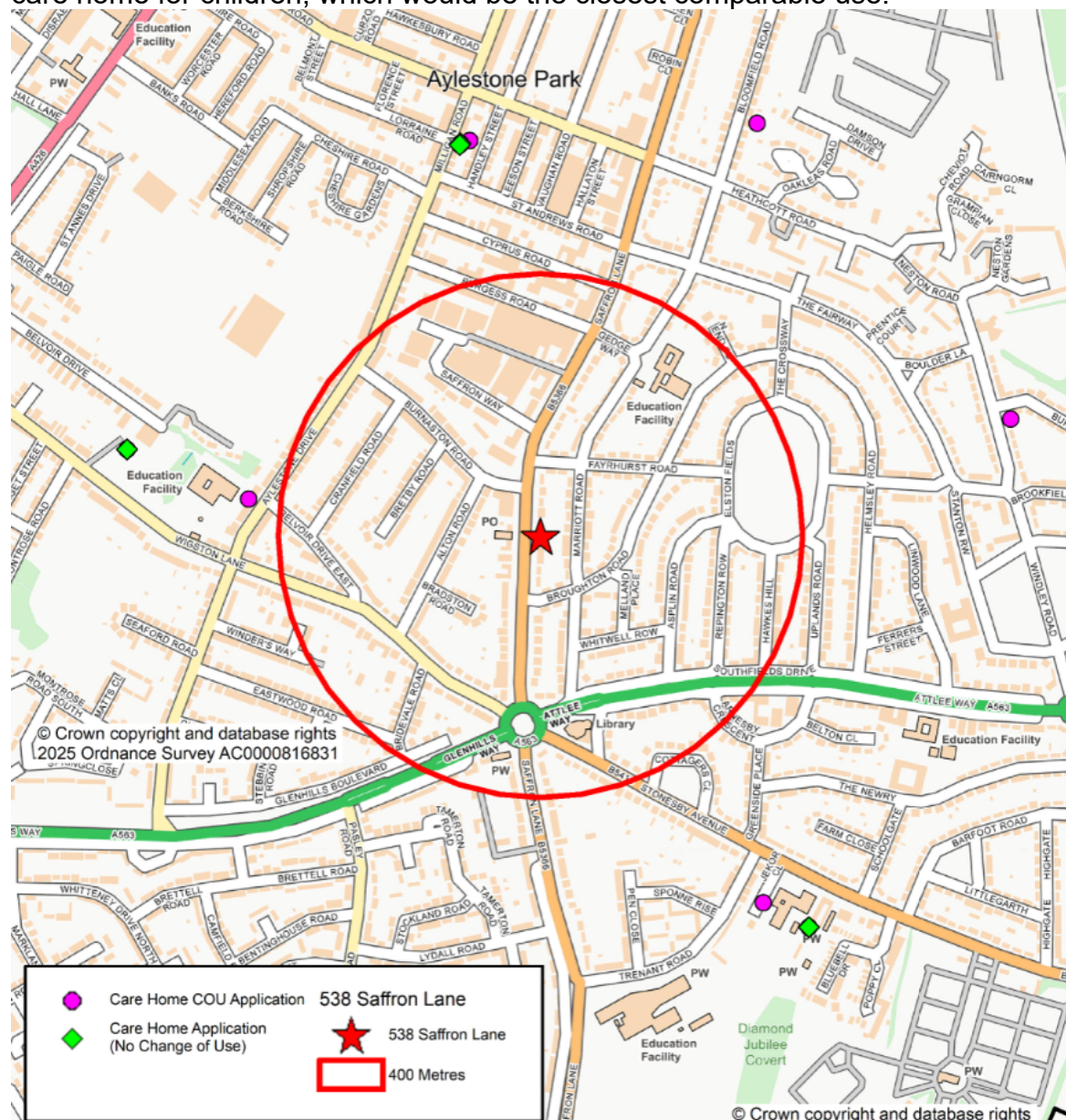
Principle of development

The proposed use is residential in nature and as such, is appropriate to take place within a house in a residential area.

The City Council aims to facilitate the provision of a range of accommodation to meet the special housing needs of all City residents and the Council's Core Strategy Policy CS06 supports the provision of supported housing to meet special needs. As such the principle of the use is in accordance with the aims of this policy and the principle of development is acceptable.

Additionally, I consider that the change of use would not contribute to any significant/unacceptable over-concentration of this type of use in this area. Having reviewed planning history of all properties within a 400m radius of the site there

are no similar properties with planning permission granted for use as a Class C2 care home for children, which would be the closest comparable use.



400m radius around the development site, 538 Saffron Lane

Living conditions (*The proposal*)

The proposed layout would be similar to the existing house layout. All principal room windows would retain good levels of light and outlook and there is sufficient space within the bedrooms to accommodate a cot. The revised plans show there would be two bathrooms available which I consider to be acceptable if two families-in-care are present in the property.

The property retains a large kitchen, a lounge with conservatory and a good-sized rear garden over 100sqm in area.

Overall, I am satisfied that the property would be able to provide a satisfactory living environment for its residents.

I would have concerns should more than two families be housed in the property at any one time and as such, I recommend a condition limiting the use of the property to a maximum of two families in care at any one time.

Residential amenity (neighbouring properties)

Taken together, NPPF paragraph 135f & 198, and Local Plan policies PS10 and PS11 require amenity to be retained for neighbouring residents from developments.

The proposed use raises the potential for increased levels of noise and disturbance to the occupiers of neighbouring properties associated with increased occupancy of the property and comings and goings.

The comments of the environmental health officer are noted; however, it is not considered reasonable to require a Noise Management Plan for a property of this scale and it would not be practical or reasonable to control how the property or its garden are used by its occupiers.

It is proposed to install additional sound insulation along the party wall with 540 Saffron Lane, which I consider would be acceptable to mitigate any sound transfer to this property and would make the property better insulated than the current house. This is recommended to be secured through a condition.

There may be increased levels of comings and goings, but I do not consider this would be detrimental to the character of the area or the residential amenity of the occupiers of neighbouring properties.

Waste storage and collection

There is sufficient space to store bins off the public highway at the property. Bin and waste arrangements are proposed to stay the same as existing, which is considered to be acceptable.

Highways and Parking

There is no off-street car parking available at the property; given the proximity of the pedestrian crossing it would not be possible to create the necessary access. Semi-formal off-street parking takes place along this section of Saffron Lane which would be able to accommodate demand for off street spaces. The property is also located in a highly sustainable location with good access to shops and services and sustainable transport options.

As such it is considered the use would be able to operate well in this location and would not have an unreasonable impact on local parking provision.

Other matters

Notwithstanding the concerns of the objectors, it is not considered that the proposed use would adversely affect the character of the area; impacts on property values are not a material planning consideration. It is noted that a safety concern has been raised but it is not considered that the use would lead to any increase in antisocial behaviour or pose any risk to local residents.

Conclusion

I therefore consider this proposal to be acceptable and recommend it is APPROVED subject to the following conditions:

CONDITIONS

1. The development shall be begun within three years from the date of this permission. (To comply with Section 91 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990.)
2. The premises shall not be used to accommodate any more than 2 families in care at any one time, unless otherwise approved in writing by the local planning authority. (To enable consideration of the amenity of residents and parking impacts of a more intensive use, in accordance with Policy CS14 of the Leicester Core Strategy (2014) and saved Policy PS10 of the Local Plan (2006).
3. Prior to the commencement of the use approved under this application, the following works shall be completed in accordance with the details contained in the approved plans:
 - New stud walls not connected to any existing party walls
 - A cavity of at least 75mm between stud and party walls
 - At least 25mm acoustic insulation quilt within the cavity
 - At least 2 layers of 15mm acoustic plasterboard(To reduce noise levels and protect the residential amenity of the occupiers of numbers 540 Saffron Lane and in accordance with saved City of Leicester Local Plan policy PS10).
4. Development shall be carried out in full accordance with the following approved plans:
 - 25/52/01, Proposed Floor Plans, Rev. A, Received on 11 September 2025
 - 25/52/04, Party Wall Sound Insulation, Received on 11 September 2025 (For the avoidance of doubt).

NOTES FOR APPLICANT

1. There are statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not always apply.

Based on the information available, this permission is considered to be one which will not require the approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun because the following statutory exemption/transitional arrangement is considered to apply:

Development below the de minimis threshold, meaning development which:

- i) does not impact an onsite priority habitat (a habitat specified in a list published under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006); and
- ii) impacts less than 25 square metres of onsite habitat that has biodiversity value greater than zero and less than 5 metres in length of onsite linear habitat (as defined in the statutory metric).

2. The City Council, as local planning authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received. This planning application has been the subject of positive and proactive discussions with the applicant during the process (and/or pre-application).

The decision to grant planning permission with appropriate conditions taking account of those material considerations in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF 2024 is considered to be a positive outcome of these discussions.

Policies relating to this recommendation

2006_AM12	Levels of car parking for residential development will be determined in accordance with the standards in Appendix 01.
2006_PS10	Criteria will be used to assess planning applications which concern the amenity of existing or proposed residents.
2006_PS11	Control over proposals which have the potential to pollute, and over proposals which are sensitive to pollution near existing polluting uses; support for alternative fuels etc.
2014_CS03	The Council will require high quality, well designed developments that contribute positively to the character and appearance of the local natural and built environment. The policy sets out design objectives for urban form, connections and access, public spaces, the historic environment, and 'Building for Life'.
2014_CS06	The policy sets out measures to ensure that the overall housing requirements for the City can be met; and to ensure that new housing meets the needs of City residents.
2014_CS14	The Council will seek to ensure that new development is easily accessible to all future users including by alternative means of travel to the car; and will aim to develop and maintain a Transport Network that will maximise accessibility, manage congestion and air quality, and accommodate the impacts of new development.