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Planning Department
Horsham District Council
Parkside
Chart Way
Horsham
West Sussex
RH12 1RL

Ref:100/266
8th April 2026

Dear Sirs,

Little Barn Owls Nursery, Easteds Barn, Easteds Lane, Southwater, RH13 9DP

Removal of covered play area and erection of single storey classroom

On behalf of Little Barn Owls Ltd we are submitting a full application for the removal of a covered play area and erection of a single storey classroom in its place at their children's nursery at Easteds Barn, Easteds Lane, Southwater, RH13 9DP.

The proposal is as follows:

The site

1. The proposal site is located within the grounds of the nursery in the north eastern corner on the boundary with Valebrook House, Easteds Lane. The site is currently occupied by a covered play shelter:



2. The main nursery building, Easteds Barn is a single storey timber clad barn with a clay tiled roof dating from the mid-late 19th century. The barn was converted into a meeting room during the 1990's and more latterly into use as a day nursery. A single storey extension was added to east façade of the barn about 10 years ago.



Easteds Barn – view from the play shelter

3. The site has vehicular access from Easteds Lane sited directly to the west of the existing building and pedestrian access from Nutham Lane to the east. The site benefits from a car park that adjoins the building which has informal parking for 12-13 vehicles.
4. Little Barn Owl's Nursery and Forest School cares for children 3 months to 5 years old. They are a full-time day nursery and forest school. Besides classrooms, the nursery has a large landscaped garden and an Atelier (a creative studio with professional artist working with children). The nursery provides a high ratio of staff to children and takes pride in providing high quality care, teaching and learning.
5. Easteds Barn is not statutorily listed nor locally listed, but is identified as a Parish Heritage Asset (a non-designated heritage asset as defined by the NPPF).
6. Easteds Barn is located in a residential area where sustainable modes of transport for both parents and staff journeys to and from the site. The site is accessible on foot, with the majority of Southwater village being within a 25-minute walking distance. The pedestrian infrastructure is well developed with footways and public rights of way allowing safe travel. Cycling is also a viable option due to the residential nature of Southwater providing safe travel. The public transport connectivity is good with the No.98 bus providing regular services from Horsham to the site.

Planning History

7. The planning history obtained from the Council's website is as follows:

Reference	Description	Decision
SQ/61/95	Erection of community building and 23 space car park	Permitted 30/08/1995
DC/11/2502	Single storey extension to existing building and variation of Condition 10 of SQ/61/95 (Use of building for meeting room purposes only), to facilitate use of overall premises for general D1 (Non residential Institutions) and D2 (Assembly and Leisure) purposes	Permitted 22/10/2013
DC/18/2212	Erection of an entrance porch and changes to existing fenestration. Internal sub-division by the installation of a first floor and staircase; internal partitioning; relocation of kitchen and WC facilities.	Permitted 12/12/2018
DC/21/0297	Retrospective application for the change of use of land from public open space to mixed use (Use Classes E(F) & F1(A)).	Withdrawn
DC/21/0510	Retention of external store	Permitted
DC/21/0511	Retention of covered play area	Permitted 03/11/2021
DC/21/1539	Retrospective application for the change of use of 67m2 land from public open space to mixed use (Use Classes E(f) & F1(a)) and 559m2 of land from Use Class E (formerly D1/D2) to public open space.	Permitted 03/11/2021

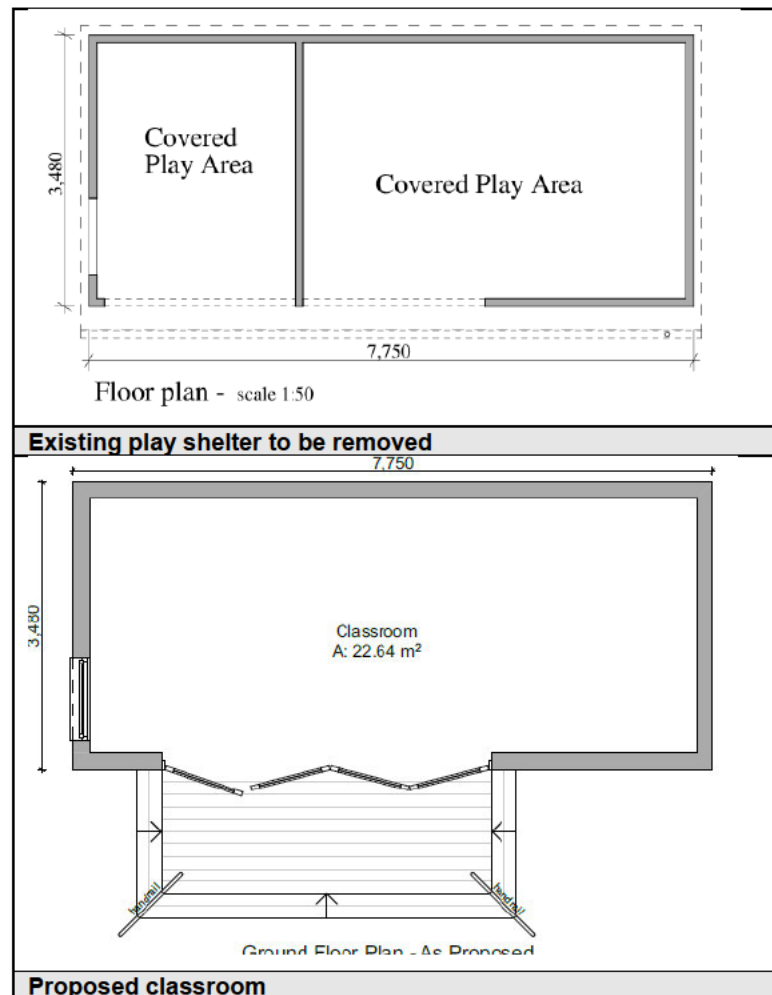
8. A request for pre-application advice to replace the covered play shelter and erect a single storey classroom was submitted in December 2026. Feedback from pre-app PE/25/0298 was as follows:

Pre-application feedback	Response
Principle of Development The principle of new or improved facilities for the permitted community facility on this site is accepted, subject to all other material considerations.	Noted.

Character and Appearance The proposal would be of a design, form and scale which is appropriate to the character and appearance of the host building and would not the harm the character or appearance of the wider area.	Noted.
Amenity Impacts The proposed building is not considered to give rise to overlooking or privacy issues to nearby properties. Whilst it is acknowledged that the site is located within the Built-Up Area, given the proximity of neighbouring residential dwellings, it is important to consider noise management. Given the increase in provision, it is considered reasonable to request a Noise Management Plan, seeking details on how this additional noise will be managed/mitigated against.	Noted. Noise Management Plan accompanies the application.
Highways Impact Given the increase in provision and potential for intensified use of the existing access, the application will be subject to consultation with WSCC Highways, as the Local Highways Authority. However, it is considered that at this stage, the proposal would accord with policies 40 and 41 of the HDPF.	Noted.
Impact on Heritage Assets The proposed building will be an improvement from the existing, and assuming the council's Conservation Officer is satisfied that the proposed building does not impact on the setting of Easteds Barn, the proposals would be acceptable.	Noted.
Biodiversity Net Gain The application would be exempt from needing to demonstrate BNG, as the development qualifies as being 'de minimis' under Regulation 4 of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024.	

Proposal

9. The proposal is to remove the covered play shelter and erect a single storey classroom.



10. The classroom consists of timber stud walls with dark stained horizontal timber cladding and a grey membrane pitched roof in charcoal grey. The building has a footprint of 27sqm. There are solid walls on the sides facing the neighbouring properties and openings facing Easteds Barn and the remainder of the playground.

Context

11. Under Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004, if regard is to be had to the Development Plan determination must be made in accordance with the Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This includes the:

Horsham District Planning Framework 2015
West Sussex Joint Minerals Local Plan 2018
West Sussex Waste Local Plan 2014
Southwater Neighbourhood Plan 2020

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

12. At the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.
13. Paragraph 100 sets out it is important that a sufficient choice of early years, school and post-16 places are available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should give **great** weight to the need to create, expand or alter early years, schools and post-16 facilities through the decisions on applications.
14. Paragraph 202 notes that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.

Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF)

15. Relevant policies include:

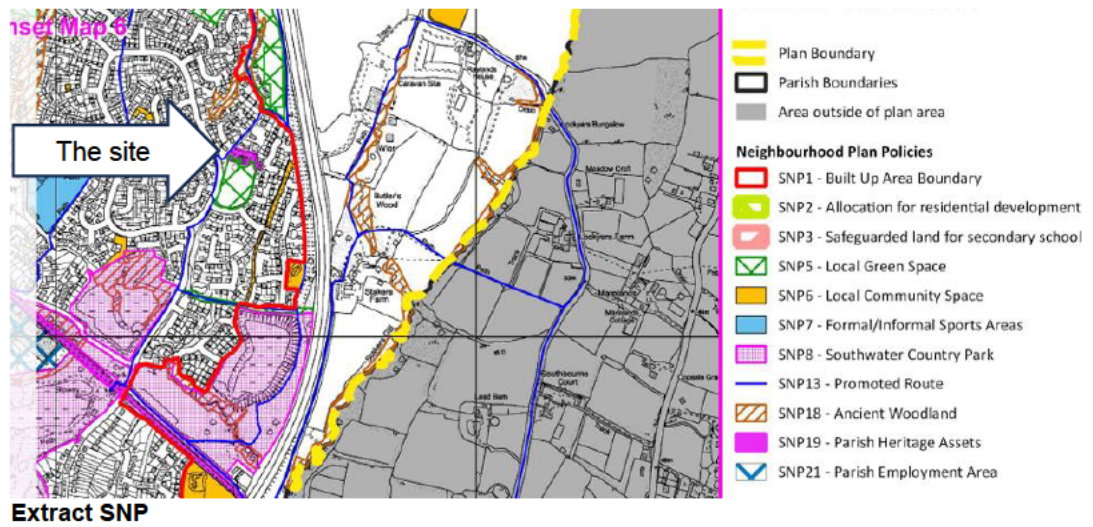
Policy 1 - Strategic Policy: Sustainable Development
Policy 2 - Strategic Policy: Strategic Development
Policy 3 - Strategic Policy: Development Hierarchy
Policy 32 - Strategic Policy: The Quality of New Development
Policy 33 - Development Principles
Policy 40 – Sustainable Transport
Policy 41 - Community Facilities, Leisure and Recreation

Southwater Neighbourhood Plan (SNP)

16. Relevant policies include:

SNP16: Design
SNP19 Parish Heritage Assets

17. The site is located within the built-up framework:



Planning Assessment

Principle of Development

18. This proposal relates to the removal of a wooden play shelter in an existing nursery playground and erection of single storey classroom. The lawful use of the site is a day nursery and it is an established part of the social infrastructure for the local area.
19. There is a shortfall in early years provision within the county.¹ West Sussex County Council (WSCC) have been allocated £1.87m in capital grant funding from central government to help address the shortfall. The focus of WSCC funding is on increasing the physical capacity of early years provision in areas where demand is likely to exceed existing supply. For this purpose, Little Barn Owls Ltd have secured a Childcare Expansion Capital Grant from WSCC of £42,620 to support the proposed increase in provision at Easteds Barn.
20. The NPPF states that the Council should give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter early years, schools and post-16 facilities through the decisions on applications.
21. HDPF Policy 43 'Community Facilities, Leisure and Recreation' states that *'The provision of new or improved community facilities or services will be supported, particularly where they meet the identified needs of local communities.'*
22. The site is located within the Built-Up Area and is convenient for use by parents/carers. In this context, the proposed expansion of the existing day nursery is important to serve the needs of local workers. The proposal will increase provision as follows:

	Existing	Proposed
Children (no.)	52	62
Staff (no.)	14	16

23. This application relates to the erection of a modest replacement structure within the existing grounds of the day nursery. The principle of new or improved facilities for the permitted community facility on this site is should be acceptable, subject to all other material considerations.

¹ "Securing sufficient childcare in West Sussex 2023-2024" by WSCC states in Horsham, the overall housing requirement of a minimum of 16,000 dwellings over the plan period 2011-2031 would generate a need for at least 1010 Early Years and Childcare places in total.

Design and Appearance

24. The classroom will be positioned in the same north eastern corner of the site as the playground play shelter. It will be similar sized to the existing structure albeit that it will be approximately 300mm higher (eaves and ridge) because it will be constructed on a concrete plinth. It compares as follows:

	Existing Play Shelter	Proposed Classroom
Length	7.750m	7.750m
Depth	3.480m	3.480m
Ridge	2.642m	2.942m
Eaves	2.300m	2.600m
Footprint	27sqm	27sqm
Roof	Charcoal grey colour single ply roofing membrane	Charcoal grey colour single ply roofing membrane
Walls	Timber stud walls with painted timber horizontal cladding	Timber stud walls with dark stained timber horizontal cladding
Gutters & RWPs	Black PVC	Black PVC

25. Building on a concrete plinth offers a more efficient installation than the excavation of traditional foundations. This will mean less disruption to neighbours, and less building works affecting the day-to-day running of the nursery.
26. Two thirds of the front (south) elevation facing the outdoor play area will be glazed which will include the door opening. The west elevation will have a square window. The east and north elevations are closed with no openings.
27. Its location in the corner of the site adjacent to a line of mature trees will have little visual impact from surrounding neighbours/ viewpoints (namely on the boundary with Valebrook House, Easteds Lane and separated by an area of open space and two boundary fences from 1 Nutham Lane). The proposal will be marginal higher than the existing taking into account the plinth. Even so, it would only just exceed by 100mm the equivalent domestic outbuilding permitted development criteria which permits structures having an eaves height of 2.5m. In winter, the building may be potentially visible above the fence line when the vegetation cover is more sparse, but this is not unusual in residential areas where outbuildings (eg garages, sheds etc) are common place. Visibility does not equal harm.

Impact on Heritage Assets

28. SNP19 identifies Easteds Barn as a Parish Heritage Asset. Parish Heritage Assets are buildings which, although not officially designated, are considered to be locally significant and important features which contribute to the character and appearance of the Parish.
29. The building was formerly associated with the historic farmstead of Easteds Farm and is a surviving remnant of this farmstead. Easteds Farmhouse is Grade II listed (List Entry Number: 1027070) and located about 30m north of the site on the far side of Valebrook House.
30. The barn was converted into a meeting room as part of a larger residential development during the 1990's (LPA Ref: SQ/14/92). A single storey extension was added to the barn about 10 years ago pursuant to permission DC/11/2502. Alterations including the erection of an entrance porch and changes to existing fenestration; internal sub-division by the installation of a first floor and staircase; internal partitioning; relocation of kitchen and WC facilities were permitted pursuant to DC/18/2212.
31. A Heritage Statement accompanies the application. It states the existing external play shelter is a modern structure of no inherent architectural or historic interest and makes no meaningful contribution towards the setting of Easteds Barn. It is a neutral element. Similarly, it is a neutral element having regard to the setting of Easteds Farmhouse. The removal of the play shelter is not considered to cause harm to the significance of these settings.
32. The scale and mass of the new structure is considered entirely appropriate. It remains single storey and subservient within the setting of the non-designated heritage asset. There is not an introduction of built form within the setting of the asset over and above that which is presently existing.
33. The proposal will result in a high quality building. It will have an unfussy design which does not seek to compete with the traditional architecture of Easteds Barn and gives a legibility of phasing across the application site. A material palette of timber cladding, windows and doors is sympathetic to the setting.
34. The proposal is not about any alterations to the fabric of the barn. The proposal does not bring development any closer to the barn. The proposal has minimal impact on the dominance of the barn in the townscape. Any harm would also need to be considered in the context of the changes to the barn and its setting that have been permitted in the past i.e. the conversion, various internal alterations and adaptations, and the single storey extension.
35. Due to its location and scale, the proposed development would still enable an appreciation of Easteds Barn, and its significance. The proposal has been designed to mitigate and avoid overall harm to the significance of the heritage asset.
36. A wholly positive impact is that the new classroom would result in the better practical functioning of the nursery. This would not merely encourage an *optimum viable use* but, in turn, support the continuing long-term and

sustainable longevity of the nursery, securing the future *preservation* of the non-designated heritage asset.

Amenity Impacts on Neighbours

37. The area where the classroom will be erected is being used as part of the children's play shelter under its permitted use. There would therefore already be an element of noise and activity carried out at this location within the site in connection with the permitted use of the site.
38. The site is located within the Built-Up Area with closest residential properties being Valebrook House, and Nos.1 and 2 Nutham Lane.
39. The proposed building will be used for creative learning activities rather than any free or unstructured play activity. The additional provision will not lead to any change in the hours of operation of the nursery as a whole nor will it result in any extension to the hours of outdoor play activities within the garden.
40. The Noise Management Plan (NMP) calculates that the noise output scales associated the extra number of children (assuming that all other factors remain unchanged) would equate to theoretical change in sound level of less than 1 dB. Whilst not a detailed acoustic prediction, it indicates that the increase in child numbers would result in only a very small change in sound level. In practice, children would not all be outside at the same time, and the additional provision would be distributed across the nursery's wider activities. Any associated increase in noise would therefore be very limited.
41. The NMP offers the following measures to ensure that the modest increase in nursery provision does not give rise to any material increase in noise impacts:
 - The three sides of the proposed classroom building facing to the east, north and west are to be constructed of solid walls. Any windows on these elevations will remain closed whilst activities are taking place inside the building, whilst the main doors (facing south) may remain open for ventilation
 - The proposed building shall not be used for any activities involving musical instruments or amplified music
 - Outdoor play and learning activities shall be structured such that the number of children using the on-site outdoor area at any one time does not materially exceed the existing pattern of use
 - Use of the outdoor area shall continue to comprise supervised and structured play and learning activities under staff oversight
 - Staff-to-child ratios will be maintained in accordance with relevant statutory and industry requirements, so that children can be appropriately managed and any instances of elevated noise can be promptly addressed
 - The nursery shall continue to make use of the off-site woodland area as part of its wider programme of outdoor learning and play activities
 - The management of noise shall be considered a key factor in any future changes to the nursery's learning and play programme. Where

necessary, this NMP will be reviewed so that any potential noise impacts can be identified and mitigated accordingly

42. The mitigations proposed in the NMP would ensure the ongoing management of noise and assist in preventing any adverse noise effects from arising in future.

Transport and parking

43. The site is in a sustainable location within the Southwater neighbourhood in close proximity to residential properties. It is within easy access to public transport facilities and links –see the Transport Note.

i) Access

44. There are no proposed changes to the vehicular and pedestrian access to the nursery. No incidents have been recorded in the vicinity of the site access and therefore it is concluded that the existing access is safe and suitable to accommodate the vehicle movements associated with a nursery.

ii) Parking

45. No specific parking standard is stipulated within the development plan and/or LHA guidance for a children's day nursery.
46. The proposals are anticipated to result in a maximum increase in five two-way vehicle movements during an hourly period at the site (see Transport Note) which equals one additional two-way vehicle movement every 12 minutes. The existing access is considered suitable to accommodate this level of increase. Therefore, in accordance with the NPPF the site ensures that safe, suitable and satisfactory accesses for the quantum of the development can be achieved.
47. The Parking Accumulation Assessment demonstrates that the existing 12-13 parking spaces is considered suitable to accommodate the proposed pupil and staff numbers.
48. No changes are proposed to the nursery operating hours.
49. Nursery start and finish times are staggered to ensure that trips to and from the site are not in concentrated blocks but spread over a set period of time.
50. The nursery operates an online software/portal providing parents/guardians with information regarding the pupil's day and therefore pick up waiting time is reduced. It is of note, that the nursery only accommodates pupils for full days and therefore no changeover periods occur in the middle of the day.

iii) Deliveries and Servicing

51. All deliveries and servicing movements are currently undertaken internally within the site during the nurseries operating hours. The nursery school manage the existing delivery schedule to avoid key drop off and pick-up times. The proposed delivery and servicing arrangements are proposed to remain as existing. It is unlikely that the increase in staff and pupil numbers will result in an increase in deliveries or servicing movements at the site.

Water Neutrality

52. Natural England have issued a Withdrawal Statement confirming that its Water Neutrality Position Statement of September 2021 has been withdrawn. The Council has confirmed that for individual applications, they will now be using the 2024/25 water efficiency savings made by Southern Water to allow all development to move forward as water neutral from 1st November 2025.

Sustainability

53. The proposed development would seek to utilise low-impact and reusable materials. Furthermore, the Applicant would continue their efforts to reduce the production of waste and promote recycling and composting. These principles are considered to align with the provisions of HDPF Policies 35-37 which promotes measures to reduce resource use and recycling.

Biodiversity Net-Gain

54. The site of the proposed development is an all-weather hard surface. The proposal does not impact a priority habitat and impacts less than:

- 25 square metres (5m by 5m) of on-site habitat
- 5 metres of on-site linear habitats such as hedgerows

The proposed development will be below the threshold and should be exempt from the mandatory biodiversity net gain (BNG) requirements.

Conclusions

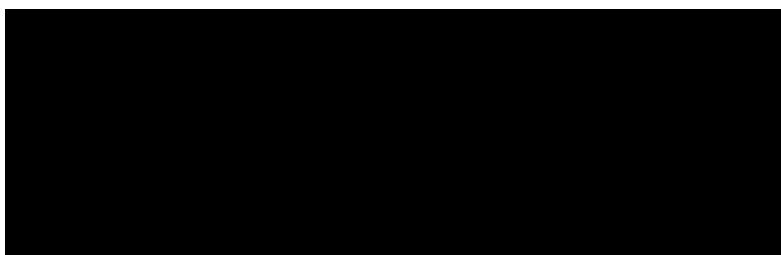
55. Little Barn Owls Ltd is Ofsted Outstanding and because of their Forest School programme is an award winning nursery.
56. There is an acknowledged shortfall in early years provision within West Sussex. To help meet this need, Little Barn Owls Ltd have secured from WSCC a Childcare Expansion Capital Grant of £42,620 to support the proposed increase in provision at Easteds Barn.
57. The proposal will permit an increase in child numbers from 52 to 62 but, in other respects, the proposed increase in numbers can be accommodated by the use of existing play areas, parking etc.
58. The mitigations proposed in the NMP would ensure the ongoing management of noise and assist in preventing any adverse noise effects from arising in future.
59. The proposal responds positively towards the historic and/or built environment whilst achieving a high standard of design and layout which respects the historic and/or architectural interest of the non-designated heritage asset, the listed building and their settings.
60. Taking into account the size and character of the Easteds Barn, the proposal should not be regarded as inappropriate development and as a consequence is in accordance with the NPPF and LP Policy.

The application submission includes:

- Cover letter/Planning Statement
- Existing floor plans and elevations
- Proposed floor plans and elevations
- Heritage Statement
- Transport Note
- Noise Management Plan

We trust that the application will be approved but should you require any further information or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully,



James Sharp Planning Limited