LEWIS & CO

PLANNING STATEMENT

RABBIT PATCH DAY NURSERY, WILLOW COTTAGE,
HANDCROSS ROAD, PLUMMERS PLAIN, RH13 6NX

ON BEHALF OF
MS ALEX TABOR

Client: MS ALEX TABOR

Site Location: RABBIT PATCH DAY NURSERY, WILLOW COTTAGE, HANDCROSS ROAD, PLUMMERS PLAIN, RH13 6NX,

Job History:

Version	Date	Author	Checked	Notes
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V2	29/09/2026	ZD	LC	Client Issue
Final	19/10/2026	ZD	LC	

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

1.1 This Statement has been prepared on behalf of Ms Alex Tabor (the applicant) and relates to an application for full planning permission for the *change of use of Willow Cottage from a 'restricted' Use Class C3, to form additional nursery space, including associated extensions and alterations.*

1.2 The proposal delivers additional nursery floorspace, to meet the significant existing, and future projected demand in the locality without increasing the footprint of existing built form at the site.

1.3 The converted building will be dedicated exclusively to the 3–5 age group. This reconfiguration allows for a more efficient redistribution of age groups across the main nursery building, optimizing space and maximizing overall capacity in accordance with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework.

1.4 External works are limited to:

- Replacement of the existing conservatory with a flat-roof canopy to form a covered outdoor play area.
- Installation of high-performance replacement windows to improve energy efficiency and thermal performance.
- Addition of a low picket fence along the front boundary to match the existing main nursery building.

There are no other external works proposed.

1.5 This statement demonstrates that the proposed development meets the requirements of local and national planning policy and should be approved in line with the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

1.6 The scheme directly addresses an established local requirement for pre-school provision, supported by recent government expansions to funded early-years childcare entitlements.

1.7 Further information is provided within the submitted drawings by Deacon and Richardson Architects and supporting documents.

2.0 APPLICATION SITE & SURROUNDING AREA

2.1. The application site currently comprises a detached single storey dwelling, set back from the street scene by a parking/circulation space. The main nursery building is a single storey flat roofed building and is sited to the southwest of the site.

2.2. The development site lies within a large plot on the outskirts of Lower Beeding. The site is within an area of varied character, with a variety of residential, commercial and rural uses within close vicinity.

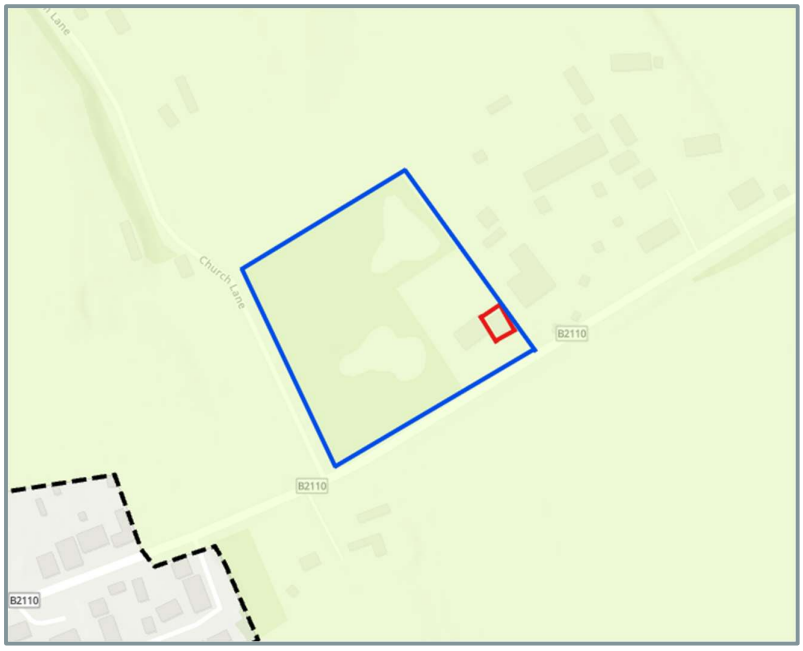
2.3. The site is fronted by a pedestrian footpath, however there are minimal views of the building from the street scene due to boundary hedging.

2.4. The existing access at the site is an 'in-out' arrangement which serves an area of staff parking, and parent drop-offs.



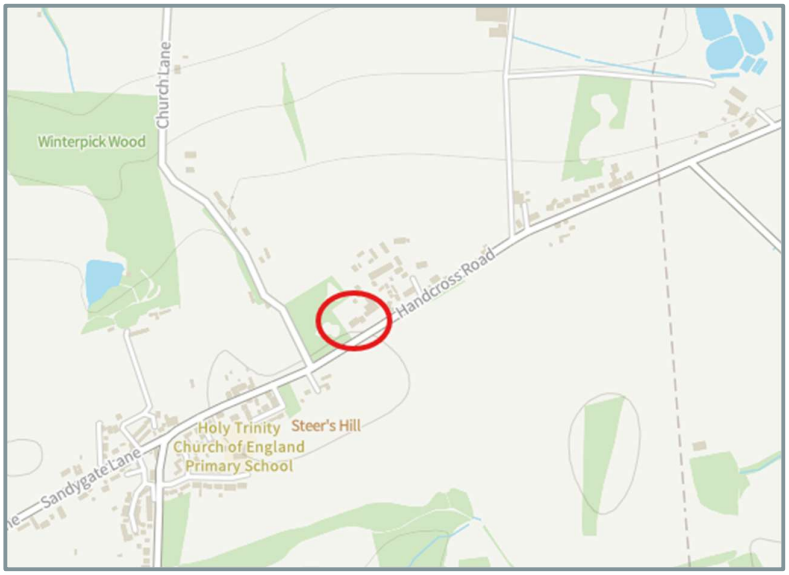
Above: Existing Site Plan

2.5. As set out earlier, the site is located outside of the built-up area boundary, indicated by the green shading below. The site is connected to Lower Beeding by a pedestrian footpath.



Above: Planning Policy Map Extract

2.6. The site is wholly within Flood Zone 1 and therefore not at risk of flooding from rivers and sea.



Above: Flood map for planning

3.0 PLANNING AND SITE HISTORY

3.1 The Council's online planning register identifies a significant number of applications relevant to the site. A summary of those which we believe relevant is below:

Reference	Description	Outcome
DC/16/2413	Erection of single storey nursery building with associated alterations to the front and rear gardens and entrance from the highway.	Approved. 08/12/2016

3.2 Application reference DC/16/2413 included Condition 5, which states:

> *"The residential dwelling shall only be occupied by someone employed by the nursery hereby approved and shall not be used as independent and separate unit of residential accommodation.*
>
> *Reason: In the interests of the amenity of the occupiers of the residential accommodation in accordance with Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015)."*

3.3 This is relevant to the application at hand, as the client seeks to convert the dwelling to form additional nursery floorspace, and make better use of the site. The client no longer wishes to live at their place of work, nor has there been interest amongst the staff of the site in living at their place of work. Further, the condition is exclusively to protect the occupiers of Willow Cottage, which will not be applicable following any commencement of the development.

3.4 Further assessment of the condition against its reason, and the relevant policy (Policy 33) will be undertaken within the 'Planning Assessment' section of this report.

4.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Full planning permission is sought for the change of use of Willow Cottage from a 'restricted' Use Class C3, to form additional nursery space.

4.2 As above, the occupation of Willow Cottage is secured by Condition 5 of DC/16/2413 to restrict occupation to an employee of Rabbit Patch nursery. The nursery has subsequently operated for almost 10 years.

4.3 The client has moved out of the site, both due to their growing family, but also because they no longer wished to live at their place of work. There has also been no interest amongst the staff of the site in living at their place of work. As such, there is no use for Willow Cottage at the site.

4.4 The proposed change of use is provided through some minor physical works, including:

- Replacement of the existing conservatory with a flat-roof canopy to form a covered outdoor play area.
- Installation of high-performance replacement windows to improve energy efficiency and thermal performance.
- Addition of a low picket fence along the front boundary to match the existing main nursery building.

4.5 The existing capacity of the nursery when full is 55 children, of all ages. The proposed change of use will expand this to a capacity of 62, representing a modest 8% increase in occupancy.

4.6 Assessment of the proposed development against the relevant planning policies will take place later in this report.

5.0 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

5.1 The adopted Local Development Plan is formed of the adopted Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 - 2031 (2018), Site Allocations Development Plan Document (2022), Burgess Hill Neighbourhood Plan 2015 - 2031. Relevant policies and guidance are summarised below.

Horsham District Planning Framework

5.2 The Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) was adopted in November 2015 and is the key planning document for the district. The following policies are particularly relevant to this application:

- Policy 1 Sustainable Development
- Policy 7 Economic Growth
- Policy 9 Employment Development
- Policy 10 Rural Economic Development
- Policy 26 Countryside Protection
- Policy 42 Inclusive Communities
- Policy 43 Community Facilities, Leisure and Recreation

Lower Beeding Neighbourhood Plan

5.3 The Parish of Lower Beeding was designated as a Neighbourhood Development Plan area on 30th December 2015.

5.4 Policy 17 relates to Existing Employment sites, and seeks to maintain and expand existing businesses where it is in keeping with the character of the area, and avoids harm to local amenities or highways.

National Planning Policy Framework

5.5 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was recently updated (August 2026) in respond to the proposed reforms, and other changes to the planning system. The NPPF sets out the government's policies for making decisions on development proposals in England, and sets out how these are expected to be applied.

5.6 National planning policy TR3: Location development in sustainable locations seeks to ensure development is sited in an area with good accessibility.

5.7 National planning policy HC1: Planning for Healthy Communities promotes the provision and retention of community facilities and public service infrastructure.

5.8 National planning policy HC4: Proposals for new and improved community facilities, public service infrastructure and development providing public health benefits.

6.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

6.1 The key material planning considerations relevant to this proposal are:

- The Principle of Development
- Design and Visual Impact
- Impact on Neighbouring Amenity
- Transport and Active Travel

Principle of Development

6.2 The principle of new residential development in this location is established by Strategic Policy 7: Economic Growth. Whilst the main 'category' of the proposed use is as a community/public infrastructure use, the development also provides employment opportunities for the staff of the establishment. Further, the creation of additional nursery capacity supports working parents within the community/city with their childcare, allowing them thereafter to pursue employment opportunities. As such, the development aligns with Part 2) of Policy 7, which seeks to support the smart growth of existing employment sites.

6.3 It is noted that the sited is located outside of a defined settlement boundary, and as such, can be defined as Rural Economic Development (Policy 10). However, as noted within the Officer's Report of DC/16/1160, the site is within close proximity of Lower Beeding (accessed along footpath B2110 at the sites' frontage) and is adjacent to the Howard's Nursery estate. The proposal, which will increase the capacity of the nursery, will result in the creation of more jobs in a rural, yet accessible, location.

6.4 Policy 43 relates to Community Facilities, with Part 1) state that improved community facilities, particularly where they meet an identified need. Part 2) of the policy confirms that in locations outside the built-up area boundary will be supported where a suitable, well-rated site exists.

6.5 The proposed development clearly aligns with this policy, as Willow Cottage remains a vacant unit of accommodation which is tied to the use of the nursery. The building is directly adjacent to the nursery, and therefore is clearly well

related to the nursery in its proposed use. The proposed development clearly aligns with Policy 43 of the Horsham District Planning Framework.

6.6 Application reference DC/16/2413 included Condition 5, which states:

> *"The residential dwelling shall only be occupied by someone employed by the nursery hereby approved and shall not be used as independent and separate unit of residential accommodation.*
>
> *Reason: In the interests of the amenity of the occupiers of the residential accommodation in accordance with Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015)."*

6.7 This is relevant to the application at hand, as the client seeks to convert the dwelling to form additional nursery floorspace, and make better use of the site. This will result in the loss in a unit of accommodation.

6.8 The reason for this policy was cited as:

> *"Reason: In the interests of the amenity of the occupiers of the residential accommodation in accordance with Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015)."*

6.9 The policy was applied to protect the residential amenities of the occupiers of Willow Cottage. It is assumed this is to avoid a member of the public moving into the unit of accommodation unaware of the adjacent nursery. As such, because the proposed development will result in the loss of the unit of accommodation, there will be no potential for harm to residential amenities.

6.10 Our client has seen a vast increase in the enquires for children aged 9 months+ and have been unable to take most of them on due to the lack of space available.

6.11 This increase is likely due to the government introducing funding for the younger age range. The introduction of 30 hours of free childcare for children over the age of nine months. Childcare expansions were made available to support the expansion of childcare across the county. These initiatives sought to make

childcare more accessible, affordable, and responsive to the needs of working families.

6.12 Further, it should be noted that the correspondence submitted (Appendix A), relates to existing demand in the locality. There is continued residential development of family homes in the vicinity of the site, which will further increase demand for nursery services.

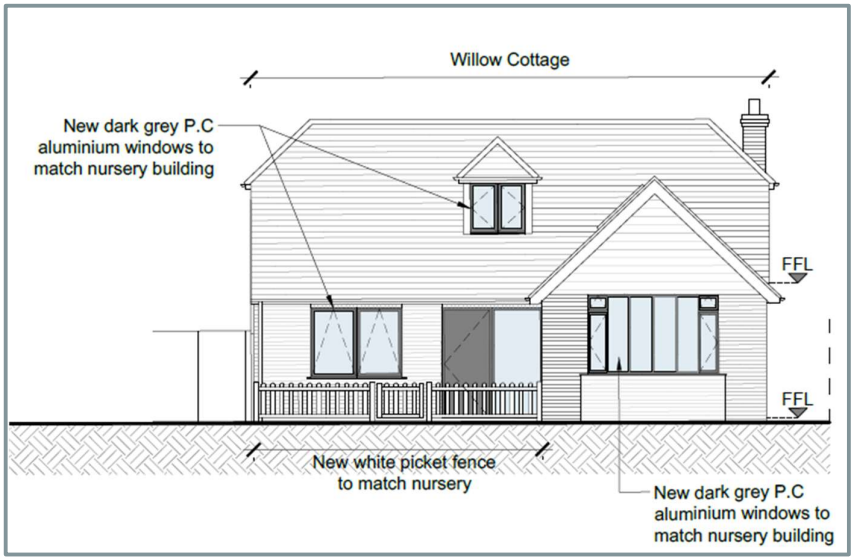
6.13 The principle of development is clearly acceptable, owing to the provision of enhanced community facilities with clear and evidenced demand, in a sustainable location.

Design and Visual Impact

6.14 This proposed development will make limited physical alterations to the host building, and will be limited to:

- Replacement of the existing conservatory with a flat-roof canopy to form a covered outdoor play area.
- Installation of high-performance replacement windows to improve energy efficiency and thermal performance.
- Addition of a low picket fence along the front boundary to match the existing main nursery building.

6.15 The proposal seeks to conserve the character of the locality, through the proposed modest alterations, which largely enhance the building from an efficiency perspective. The replacement of the rear conservatory with a covered canopy area will not be visible from the public realm, owing to screening provided by built form, and boundary treatment. The height and scaling of the canopy allows it to appear subservient to the host building, and result in a neutral impact on local character.



Above: Proposed front elevation of building

6.16 The proposed dark grey windows responds to the palette of materials of the existing adjacent nursery building. This allows the change of use of Willow Cottage to visually resonate with the existing nursery, through the use of consistent, and attractive materials.



Above: Street scene excerpt

6.17 The proposed white picket fence is a minor change to the visual appearance of the building, especially given the set-back nature of the site, and the modest height of the fence.

6.18 Physical alterations to the building are limited, as the main change is the change of use of the building. The proposed works to the building are of a sympathetic and subservient scale, allowing the building to resonate with the appearance of the existing nursery. As such, it is clear the proposed development represents a high quality of development in line with Policy 32 and 33 of the Horsham District Framework.

Impact on Neighbouring Amenity

6.19 The nearest residential property is located on the opposite side of the road, almost 100m away to the south west. Due to this separation distance, there is very low potential for harm to residential amenities. It is accepted the additional nursery floorspace will create some additional noise/disturbance through children playing in the outdoor areas, and additional traffic movements to/from the site. However, this is against the background of the existing nursery, the adjacent commercial site, and the busy B2110.

6.20 The layout and scale of development has been designed to reduce massing close to the adjoining commercial properties to the east of the site.

6.21 On this basis, the proposed development will preserve the amenities of nearby residential occupiers, and so complies with Policy 33. Where necessary appropriate design interventions have been taken to avoid the potential for new amenity impacts.

Transport and Active Travel

6.22 The application is accompanied by a Transport Statement from Steeve Reeves Transport Consultants, demonstrating compliance with relevant transport policies and guidance.

6.23 This Planning Statement should be read in accordance with the submitted Transport Statement. The Transport Statement concludes that there is ample capacity within the site to ensure that there will be no parking demand spilling out of the site and on to Handcross Road, and that there is no case to be made that would suggest that the nursery use, or this proposed expansion would be detrimental to highway safety or affect the free flow of traffic.

6.24 The proposals therefore comply with Policy 40 of the Horsham District Framework and the tests set out in the NPPF with the impacts falling well below 'severe'. Therefore, the development proposal is acceptable in transport and highways terms.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The Statement has been prepared on behalf of Ms Alex Tabor (the applicant) and relates to an application for full planning permission for the *Change of use of Willow Cottage from a 'restricted' Use Class C3, to form additional nursery space, including associated extensions and alterations*.

7.2 The proposal delivers additional nursery floorspace, to meet the significant demand in the locality without increasing the footprint of existing built form at the site. This reconfiguration allows for a more efficient redistribution of age groups across the main nursery building, optimizing space and maximizing overall capacity in accordance with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework.

7.3 The development represents high-quality, sustainable proposal, which meets an identified community facility need for the area. The physical works required to accommodate the change of use are of a modest nature, and will have a minimal impact on the character and appearance of the locality. The development proposal aligns with Policy 33 and 43 of the Horsham District Planning Framework.

7.4 The proposed provides safe access, ample vehicle/cycle parking (exceeding local standards), and close proximity to local amenities. The proposal supports active travel, and results in negligible highway impacts, in line with local Policy and the NPPF. The proposal also delivers notable economic and local financial benefits.

7.5 For all these reasons, the scheme is an excellent example clearly aligns with local, and national planning policy. In light of the above, Horsham District Council is respectfully requested to grant planning permission for the proposed development without undue delay.

Lewis and Co Planning
October 2026