



PLANNING STATEMENT

Country Mice Nursery
Station Road
Cowfold
West Sussex
RH13 8DA

Proposed Extension to Provide Dedicated Baby and SEND Provision, Installation of Solar Panels and Additional Adult Toilet Facilities

1. Introduction

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for the improvement and extension of Country Mice Nursery, Station Road, Cowfold.

The proposal seeks to enhance the nursery's facilities through:

- A modest extension to create dedicated baby and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision space.
- Installation of roof-mounted solar photovoltaic panels.
- Provision of an additional adult toilet facility.
- Associated internal alterations and improvements.

The proposed development has been carefully designed to improve the quality, accessibility, inclusivity and sustainability of the nursery while safeguarding its long-term future as an important community facility serving local families.

2. Site Context

Country Mice Nursery is located on Station Road, Cowfold, West Sussex and serves families from Cowfold and surrounding rural communities.

As a village-based early years setting, the nursery provides an essential local service, enabling families to access high-quality childcare close to home. The nursery plays a significant role in supporting children's development, school readiness and family wellbeing while helping parents and carers to remain in employment, training and education.

The nursery occupies a building that has served the community for many years. However, the building is now over 40 years old and requires improvement and adaptation to ensure it remains fit for purpose and capable of meeting the evolving needs of children, families and staff.

3. Need for the Development

Country Mice Nursery currently offers 22 childcare places per day and supports more than 50 families throughout the week. Demand for high-quality childcare provision remains strong within the local area, and the nursery has become increasingly involved in supporting children with a wide range of additional needs.

The nursery currently provides care and support for children with Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), speech and language difficulties, and more complex and rare conditions including Pitt-Hopkins Syndrome and Ectodermal Dysplasia.

The existing building was not originally designed to accommodate the increasing need for dedicated SEND provision or specialist spaces for babies and younger children. As a result, the current layout limits the nursery's ability to provide the most suitable environments for learning, development and targeted support.

The proposed extension will create dedicated spaces that are better suited to supporting children's individual developmental, educational and sensory needs. It will also improve safeguarding, operational efficiency and the overall quality of provision available to children and families.

Access to childcare and specialist support can be more limited in rural communities than in larger towns. The proposal will help ensure that families in Cowfold and neighbouring villages continue to have access to inclusive, high-quality childcare and early years support within their local community.

4. Supporting Inclusion and Early Intervention

Country Mice Nursery is committed to ensuring that every child has access to high-quality early years education regardless of their individual needs or circumstances.

The proposed SEND provision area will create a dedicated space that enables practitioners to provide targeted support, sensory activities, small-group interventions and individualised learning opportunities. It will also provide a more suitable environment for collaborative working with families and external professionals.

Early identification and intervention are widely recognised as key factors in improving outcomes for children with additional needs. The proposed development will strengthen the nursery's ability to deliver inclusive provision and support children at the earliest possible stage of their development.

5. Staff Welfare and Accessibility

The proposal includes the provision of an additional adult toilet facility to improve staff and visitor welfare and support the continued operation of the nursery.

The wider project will also contribute to improving accessibility and usability within the building, ensuring that facilities remain suitable for children, staff, parents, carers and visitors.

6. Sustainability

A key element of the proposal is the installation of roof-mounted solar photovoltaic panels.

The solar panels will reduce the nursery's reliance on grid electricity, lower energy costs and contribute towards reducing carbon emissions. The proposal therefore supports national and local objectives relating to environmental sustainability and climate change mitigation.

In addition to the direct environmental benefits, the project will provide opportunities for children to develop awareness of sustainability and renewable energy as part of their early years learning experiences.

7. Planning Policy Considerations

The proposed development accords with the overarching principles of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), particularly those that seek to:

- Support strong, vibrant and healthy communities.
- Promote the retention and enhancement of valued community facilities.
- Deliver inclusive and accessible environments.
- Support high-quality design.
- Encourage sustainable development and measures that reduce carbon emissions.

The proposal also aligns with the objectives of local planning policy by maintaining and improving an important community facility that provides essential childcare and educational services within a rural village setting.

The development is modest in scale and has been designed to integrate sensitively with the existing building. It is not anticipated to result in any significant adverse impacts on neighbouring properties, residential amenity, highway safety or the character of the surrounding area.

8. Community Support and Benefits

Country Mice Nursery is a valued and well-established part of the local community. The nursery currently supports more than 50 families and plays an important role in the social and economic wellbeing of Cowfold and the surrounding area.

The project has received significant support from parents, families and members of the wider community. Local fundraising initiatives have been undertaken to help secure investment in the nursery's future and improve the facilities available to children.

The project has also attracted support through applications to external funding programmes, including the Aviva Community Fund, demonstrating wider recognition of the importance of investing in sustainable, inclusive and accessible early years provision.

The proposal will deliver a range of community benefits including:

- Improved facilities for babies and younger children.
- Enhanced SEND provision and support for children with additional needs.
- Improved staff and visitor facilities.
- Increased accessibility and inclusivity.
- Reduced environmental impact through renewable energy generation.
- Long-term protection and enhancement of a valued rural childcare facility.

9. Consultation

The nursery is committed to working positively with Horsham District Council and all relevant stakeholders throughout the planning process.

The proposal has been developed in response to identified operational needs, feedback from families and the growing demand for inclusive childcare provision. Ongoing engagement with the local community and interested parties will continue as the project progresses.

10. Conclusion

This application seeks permission for a modest and carefully considered extension and improvement project at Country Mice Nursery.

The proposal will provide dedicated facilities for babies and children with SEND, improve staff welfare, enhance accessibility, reduce the building's environmental impact through the installation of solar panels and secure the long-term future of an important community asset.

The development will directly benefit more than 50 local families, strengthen childcare provision within Cowfold and surrounding rural communities, and support some of the area's most vulnerable children through improved specialist facilities and early intervention opportunities.

The proposal represents sustainable development that delivers clear social, environmental and community benefits. It is therefore respectfully submitted that planning permission should be granted.

Signed

Lisa Hillier

Date

01/06/2026