Design & Access Statement

Proposed Extension to Existing Children's Day Nursery
Country Kids Day Nursery, Main Road, Holbeach Drove, Whaplode, Spalding, PE12 0PS

Application site	Country Kids Day Nursery, Main Road, Holbeach Drove, Whaplode, Spalding, PE12 0PS
Proposal	Extensions and internal reconfiguration to an existing children's day nursery, including additional nursery accommodation and first-floor staff/office facilities.
Existing floor area	195.6m² total: 125.6m² ground floor and 70.0m² first floor.
Proposed floor area	385.6m² total: 293.8m² ground floor and 91.8m² first floor.
Net additional floor area	190.0m².
Public benefit	Approximately 30 additional childcare places and 10 new jobs.
Parking	7 formalised on-site parking spaces shown within the submitted scheme.
Opening hours	Existing opening hours to remain unchanged.
Biodiversity Net Gain	On-site gain of 19.66% in area habitat units and 48.25% in hedgerow units, based on the submitted HS Ecology assessment.

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1. Introduction

This Design and Access Statement is submitted in support of a full planning application for extensions and associated works at Country Kids Day Nursery, Main Road, Holbeach Drove, Whaplode, Spalding. The proposal seeks to expand and improve an established children's day nursery in order to provide additional childcare places, improved internal accommodation, better staff and welfare facilities, and a clearer on-site parking arrangement.

The nursery is an established local early years facility serving Holbeach Drove and the wider rural catchment. The applicant has identified significant demand for additional childcare provision, with the proposal enabling approximately 30 additional nursery places and creating 10 new jobs. The development therefore has clear social and economic benefits, supporting local families, early years education and the ability of parents and carers to access employment.

The scheme has been developed following two rounds of formal pre-application advice from South Holland District Council and subsequent informal dialogue with the planning officer. The final design has been amended to respond directly to officer concerns regarding scale, composition and integration with the host building. This Statement explains the site context, policy background, design evolution, proposed development, access arrangements, amenity considerations, biodiversity response and overall planning balance.

2. Site Context and Existing Use

The application site comprises the existing Country Kids Day Nursery premises on Main Road, Holbeach Drove. The site lies within the defined settlement boundary of Holbeach Drove, which is identified in the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan as an “Other Service Centre”. The site is therefore within a settlement where development that supports the role of the settlement, helps sustain existing facilities or helps meet the service needs of local communities may be acceptable, subject to detailed development management considerations.

The existing building has the form and appearance of a former domestic building that has been adapted over time for nursery use. The submitted existing plans show a ground floor comprising lobby, mixed room, kitchen, disabled WC, WC facilities, store and activity room, with first-floor rooms identified as Baby 1 and Baby 2. The existing elevations show a building of relatively mixed character, with domestic proportions, varied fenestration and previous additions.

The wider context is a rural settlement environment with a mixture of residential and local service uses arranged along Main Road. The nursery is already established in this location and forms part of the local community infrastructure. The proposal does not introduce a new use to the site; rather, it seeks to improve and expand an existing and accepted use.

3. Need for the Development and Community Benefit

The proposal is driven by a clear operational and community need. The nursery is successful and oversubscribed, with demand for places exceeding the capacity of the existing accommodation. This creates difficulty for local parents seeking suitable childcare in a rural area where alternative provision may be more limited and where travel distances can be greater than in larger settlements.

The proposed development would provide approximately 30 additional childcare places. This is a substantial increase in local early years capacity and directly supports families in Holbeach Drove and the surrounding villages. In practical terms, additional nursery places can assist parents and carers in returning to work, maintaining employment and accessing local childcare without needing to travel further afield.

The proposal would also generate 10 new jobs. These employment benefits are directly linked to the expansion of an existing local business and would support the rural economy. The planning benefits are therefore twofold: the development improves access to childcare and creates additional local employment.

The National Planning Policy Framework gives substantial support to the provision and expansion of early years places. Paragraph 100 identifies the importance of ensuring a sufficient choice of early years, school and post-16 places and states that local planning authorities should give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter early years provision. The proposal directly aligns with that objective.

4. Planning Policy Context

The development falls to be assessed against the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2011-2036 and the National Planning Policy Framework. The most relevant Local Plan policies include Policy 1 (Spatial Strategy), Policy 2 (Development Management), Policy 3 (Design of New Development), Policy 4 (Approach to Flood Risk), Policy 5 (Meeting Physical Infrastructure and Service Needs), Policy 28 (The Natural Environment), Policy 32 (Community, Health and Well-being), Policy 33 (Delivering a More Sustainable Transport Network), Policy 36 (Vehicle and Cycle Parking) and Appendix 6 (Parking Standards).

Policy 1 is supportive in principle because the site lies within Holbeach Drove, an Other Service Centre, and the proposal would help sustain and expand an existing community facility. Policy 5 is also relevant by analogy to education and early years provision, because the development responds to an identified need for childcare capacity. Policy 32 supports community infrastructure and facilities that meet local needs and promote health, wellbeing and social inclusion.

Policies 2 and 3 require the detailed design to respect local character, achieve an appropriate relationship with neighbouring uses, avoid unacceptable amenity impacts, and ensure appropriate access, parking and servicing arrangements. The design response and supporting information submitted with this application demonstrate that these matters have been considered carefully.

5. Pre-Application Engagement and Design Evolution

Pre-application advice has played a central role in the development of the scheme. The initial pre-application submission explained that the nursery was oversubscribed and that the applicant wished to extend the premises to increase available spaces and make better use of the existing building. South Holland District Council confirmed that the principle of extending an existing established nursery within the settlement boundary was appropriate, subject to detailed matters including character, residential amenity, highway safety and flood risk.

The first pre-application response identified that the western side extension, rear extension and modest replacement reception/porch element were acceptable in principle. However,

concerns were raised regarding the second front extension and eastern side/front arrangement, particularly where elements projected forward of the existing building line and introduced differing roof forms. The advice was clear that the design required reconsideration before any formal application could be supported.

A revised scheme was then prepared and submitted for further comment. The second pre-application response again accepted the broad principle of development and gave weight in favour of the proposal under the policy support for early years provision. However, the officer remained concerned that the proposed extensions represented a large increase in footprint and that the single-storey wraparound form could appear poorly integrated with the host building and somewhat atypical within the street scene.

Further informal discussions were held with the planning officer. In response, the scheme was amended to introduce a first-floor element above the kitchen/staff area. This was specifically intended to improve the integration of the extensions, reduce the appearance of a low-level wraparound addition and create a more coherent overall composition. The officer subsequently advised, informally and without prejudice, that the two-storey element helped integrate the extensions to a greater extent and would help the appearance significantly. On balance, the amended design was considered potentially acceptable, particularly having regard to the wider benefits of the proposal.

The submitted application therefore reflects an iterative and constructive design process. The proposal has not been advanced in isolation; it has been shaped by the Council's advice, with specific amendments made to address concerns regarding design, massing and visual integration.

6. Proposed Development

The application proposes extensions and internal alterations to the existing nursery building. The submitted proposed plans show a comprehensive ground-floor nursery layout including reception, toddler rooms, preschool room, ancillary room, baby rooms, kitchen, visitor/staff toilets and associated welfare facilities. The first-floor element provides staff-focused accommodation, including staff kitchen, staff room, office, meeting room and staff toilets.

The existing building has a total floor area of 195.6m², comprising 125.6m² at ground floor and 70.0m² at first floor. The proposed building would provide a total floor area of 385.6m², comprising 293.8m² at ground floor and 91.8m² at first floor. The net additional floor area would therefore be 190.0m². This additional space is necessary to provide increased childcare capacity and to improve the functionality, safeguarding, circulation and staff support arrangements within the nursery.

The proposal retains the established nursery use and does not seek to extend the operating hours. The development is therefore an expansion and improvement of an existing facility rather than the introduction of a materially different land use.

7. Layout, Scale and Design Appearance

The proposed layout has been designed to make best use of the existing nursery site while retaining the established relationship with Main Road and neighbouring properties. The extensions are contained within the existing site boundaries and are arranged around the existing building to provide a more efficient internal nursery layout.

The scale of the development is acknowledged to be substantial in relation to the existing building. However, the scale is directly related to the functional requirements of an early years facility, including separate age-group rooms, suitable toilet provision, reception and management space, staff welfare areas, kitchen facilities and ancillary accommodation. The proposal should therefore be assessed not simply as a visual addition, but as a necessary expansion of a community facility where additional childcare places have been identified as a local need.

The final design has been carefully amended to avoid the most problematic aspects identified during pre-application discussions. The introduction of the first-floor staff/office element gives the building a clearer hierarchy and helps integrate the extensions with the existing two-storey form. The resultant composition is more coherent than the earlier single-storey wraparound arrangement and provides a more legible built form when viewed from the public realm.

The proposed elevations show a more rationalised appearance than the existing building, with the extensions visually tied together through a consistent material approach. The design remains domestic in scale and character, which is appropriate for the settlement context and the former residential character of the host building, while providing the level of accommodation required by a modern nursery.

8. Access, Parking and Highway Safety

The existing nursery is served from Main Road and currently operates with an informal on-site parking arrangement. The proposal represents an improvement in this respect by formalising the parking layout and showing 7 marked on-site parking spaces within the submitted scheme.

The formalisation of parking is a positive element of the proposal. It provides greater clarity for staff, visitors and parents, and allows the site to be managed more effectively than the current informal arrangement. The proposal does not alter the established nature of nursery-related trips to and from the site, and the opening hours will remain unchanged.

The site is located within an existing settlement and serves a rural catchment where private vehicle drop-off and collection will inevitably form part of the operational pattern. The additional childcare places may increase activity at certain times of day; however, the proposal also improves the site layout by providing clearly identified parking spaces and maintaining the established access arrangements. The submitted scheme is therefore considered acceptable in highway and parking terms, subject to any detailed comments from the Local Highway Authority.

9. Residential Amenity and Operational Impacts

The proposal has been designed to respect neighbouring occupiers and nearby land users. The nursery use is already established on the site and the proposed development would not introduce a new type of activity. The opening hours will remain as existing, meaning the development would not extend nursery activity into later evening or weekend periods.

The proposed extensions sit within the existing nursery plot and maintain acceptable separation from surrounding dwellings. The development would not give rise to unacceptable overlooking, loss of privacy, overbearing impact or overshadowing. The first-floor accommodation is staff-focused, comprising office, meeting and welfare space, rather than nursery rooms generating intensive overlooking or external activity.

The kitchen arrangements are modest and no major commercial extract system or significant external plant is proposed. Any kitchen ventilation would be similar in scale to domestic extract provision and would not be expected to give rise to material noise, odour or visual impacts. This directly addresses the matter raised during pre-application discussions regarding the need to clarify ventilation and plant associated with the kitchen.

Overall, the proposal would improve the quality and functionality of the existing nursery accommodation without creating unacceptable harm to neighbouring amenity.

10. Flood Risk and Drainage

The site lies within South Holland, where flood risk and drainage are important planning considerations. Policy 4 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan requires proposals to take account of flood risk and to be supported by appropriate assessment where required.

The proposal relates to the extension of an existing nursery within an established settlement site. Surface water and drainage matters will be addressed through the submitted application information and any necessary detailed drainage design. The development does not introduce a more vulnerable residential use and does not alter the established nursery use of the site. The design and construction of the extensions can incorporate appropriate flood-resilient and drainage measures at detailed design and Building Regulations stage.

11. Biodiversity Net Gain and Ecology

A Biodiversity Assessment has been prepared by HS Ecology. The survey was undertaken on 20 February 2026 and confirms that the site comprises existing building, hardstanding, modified grassland, sparsely vegetated land, artificial/unvegetated surfaces and nursery-associated external areas. The site does not occur within a biodiversity opportunity or green infrastructure area.

The baseline habitat value is low, reflecting the developed and managed character of the nursery site. The total site area is 1,122m², with the baseline area habitat value calculated at 0.08 biodiversity units. This value is derived from limited areas of sparsely vegetated land and modified grassland. Existing non-native hedgerows along the western and part eastern boundaries provide 0.04 linear habitat units.

Post-development, the scheme retains and enhances the grassland area, proposes its enhancement to other neutral grassland through appropriate seeding and management, retains the existing 40m of non-native hedgerow and introduces 10m of new native hedgerow planting. The post-development habitat value is calculated at 0.10 area habitat units and 0.06 hedgerow units.

The proposal therefore achieves a 19.66% gain in area habitat units and a 48.25% gain in linear hedgerow units. The development would not result in the loss of a high-value ecological site; rather, it provides proportionate and deliverable on-site enhancement within the constraints of an operational nursery site.

The assessment notes that an ash tree was removed in 2020 due to ash dieback and hazard concerns. The report explains that, given the timescales involved and the necessary and justifiable nature of the removal, the tree has been excluded from the red line boundary

following discussion with the LPA ecologist. The BNG position is therefore clearly documented and supported by the submitted metric and habitat plans.

12. Sustainability and Efficient Use of Land

The proposal makes efficient use of an existing developed site within the defined settlement boundary. It expands an established community facility rather than requiring a new nursery site elsewhere, thereby making best use of existing infrastructure, access arrangements and the established relationship between the nursery and local families.

The extended building will be subject to current Building Regulations standards, improving the thermal and operational performance of the building fabric where new work is undertaken. The internal reconfiguration also improves the functional sustainability of the nursery by providing better age-group separation, welfare provision, staff accommodation and management space.

By increasing childcare availability in an existing rural settlement, the proposal can also reduce the need for some families to travel further to alternative nursery provision. This is a practical sustainability benefit in a rural context where local services are important to reducing unnecessary journeys and supporting community resilience.

13. Planning Balance and Conclusion

The proposal represents a carefully considered expansion of an established children's day nursery within the Holbeach Drove settlement boundary. The principle of development has been accepted through pre-application advice, with officers acknowledging that the extension of an existing and well-established nursery is appropriate in this location, subject to detailed matters.

The principal design concern raised during pre-application discussions related to the scale and composition of the earlier schemes. The submitted proposal has evolved directly in response to those concerns. The introduction of the first-floor staff/office element above the kitchen area has improved the integration of the extensions and resulted in a more coherent overall composition. The design process demonstrates constructive engagement with the Council and a clear willingness to amend the scheme to address officer feedback.

The public benefits are significant. The development would provide approximately 30 additional childcare places and create 10 new jobs. These are substantial social and economic benefits, particularly in a rural settlement where childcare provision is important to local families and to the ability of parents and carers to work. The proposal is strongly supported by the thrust of the NPPF, which gives great weight to the need to create, expand or alter early years provision.

The proposal also formalises on-site parking with 7 marked spaces, retains existing operating hours, avoids major external plant or commercial extraction, and delivers measurable on-site biodiversity net gain. The development would not give rise to unacceptable harm to neighbouring amenity, highway safety, ecology or the wider character of the area.

In conclusion, the proposal is an appropriate, policy-supported and beneficial extension to an existing community facility. Any residual visual change arising from the increased scale of the building is limited and is clearly outweighed by the substantial public benefits of expanded childcare provision, local job creation, improved nursery facilities and biodiversity

enhancement. The application should therefore be supported in accordance with the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan, the National Planning Policy Framework and all other material considerations.