

Application reference number	2025/0893
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Application Type	Full planning permission
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Proposal Description:	Change of use of the existing caretaker's bungalow into a school day nursery (Use Class F1(a)) with associated alterations to external appearance; and works to wider school site including extension to car park, new external play areas and boundary treatments (Part Retrospective)
Location:	The Mill Academy, Lobwood, Worsbrough Bridge, Barnsley, S70 5EP

Applicant	Ash Clark (HC Academy Trust)
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Number of Third Party Reps	One	Parish:	n/a
		Ward:	Worsbrough Ward

SUMMARY

The proposal seeks full planning permission for the change of use of a former caretaker's bungalow into a school day nursery. In addition, alterations are proposed to extend the adjacent parking area to provide an additional three parking spaces and to create a new play area and install new fencing.

The proposal is considered to be acceptable in policy terms being designated as urban fabric and greenspace within the Local Plan and being located in the grounds of an existing primary school. It is therefore considered to be an acceptable and sustainable form of development in line with paragraphs 7 and 8 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024).

The report demonstrates that any harm generated by the proposal is outweighed by other material planning considerations. The development would not cause an unacceptable level of harm to neighbouring properties, the highway network, trees or the wider character of the area subject to suitably worded conditions.

Recommendation: **GRANT Planning Permission**

Introduction

- The proposal seeks full planning permission for the change of use of a former caretaker's bungalow into a school day nursery, in the grounds of an existing primary school. In addition, alterations are proposed to extend the adjacent parking area to provide an additional three parking spaces and to create a new play area and install new fencing.
- The site is designated as urban fabric and greenspace within the Local Plan
- The submitted application form indicates that work started on site on 25 August 2025.
- The application has been amended to address concerns from the Ecologist and to respond to comments from the Highways Engineer

Site Description

The application site includes the former caretaker's bungalow in the grounds of an existing primary school. The bungalow is set forward of the school buildings but back from the road and adjacent to areas used for play. There are semi-detached houses on the opposite side of Lobwood, and the road itself is subject to the normal parking restrictions associated with a location next to a school, as well as being one way.

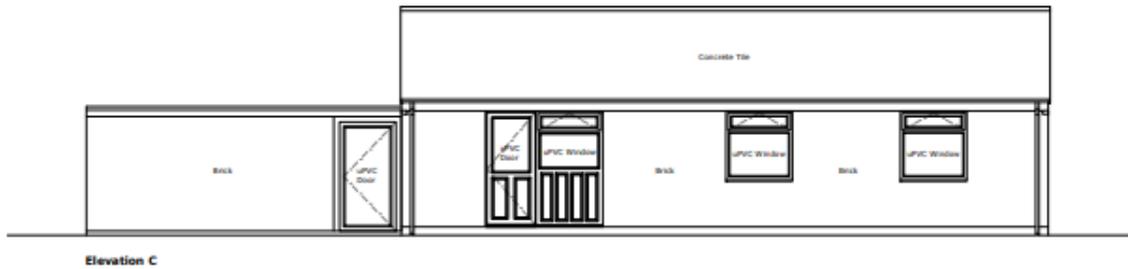
Proposal

The planning application proposes to change the use of the former caretaker's bungalow (three bed) into a children's nursery. In addition to internal alterations to create the space required for a single nursery space, there are external alterations to the building to change the configuration of windows and doors, additional surfacing extending into greenspace to create new parking spaces and new fencing proposed. The application is part retrospective as work has already commenced on site.

The application is supported by amended Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment and Metric and a Tree Survey Risk Report

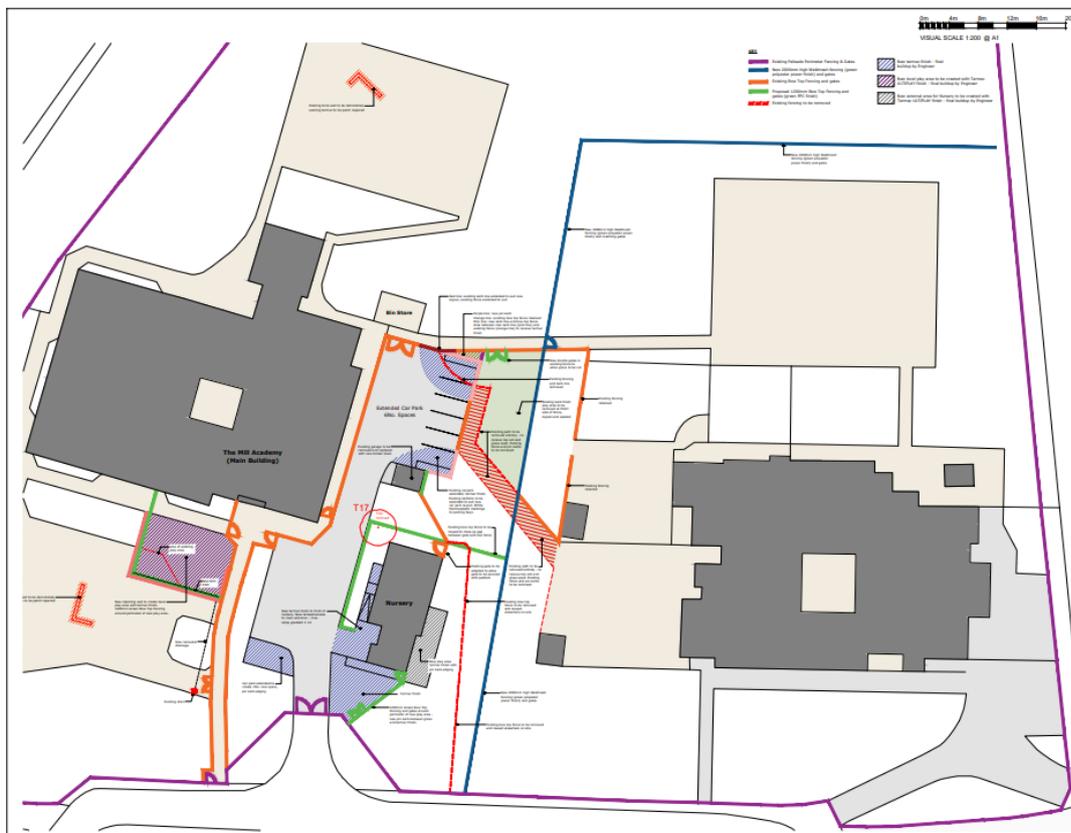
Proposed Elevations where alterations proposed





Elevation C

Proposed external ground works – including new and extended play and parking areas, new fencing (blue line shows the proposed 2 metre high green finished weldmesh fencing; green lines show the proposed 1.2 metre high green finished bow top)



Relevant Site History

Application Reference	Application description	Status
	Historic applications for extensions and fencing associated with the use of the school	

Policy Context

Planning decisions should be made in accordance with the current development plan policies unless material considerations indicate otherwise; the National Planning Policy

Framework (NPPF) does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making.

The Local Plan was adopted in January 2019 and is accompanied by seven masterplan frameworks which apply to the largest site allocations (housing, employment, and mixed-use sites). In addition, the Council has adopted a series of Supplementary Planning Documents and Neighbourhood Plans which provide supporting guidance and specific local policies which are a material consideration in the decision-making process.

The Local Plan review was approved at the full Council meeting held 24th November 2022. The review determined that the Local Plan remains fit for purpose and is adequately delivering its objectives. This means, no updates to the Local Plan, in whole or in part, are to be carried out ahead of a further review. The next review is due to take place in 2027, or earlier, if circumstances require it.

Local Plan

The site is identified as Urban Fabric and Greenspace within the Local Plan and as such the following policies are considered to be relevant to this application:

- Policy SD1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- Policy GD1: General Development
- Policy D1: High Quality Design and Place Making
- Policy T3: New Development and Sustainable Travel
- Policy D1: High Quality Design and Place Making
- Policy GS1: Greenspace
- Policy BIO1: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- Policy CL1: Contaminated and Unstable Land
- Policy POLL1: Pollution Control and Protection
- Policy I2: Education Facilities

Adopted Supplementary Planning Documents relevant to this application:

Biodiversity and Geodiversity
Parking

NPPF

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. At the heart is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved unless material considerations indicate otherwise. NPPF policy of relevance to this application includes:

Paragraph 100 - Local planning authorities should give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter early years, schools and post-16 facilities through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications.

Paragraph 116 - Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

Paragraph 187 - Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment including by (amongst other things) providing net gains for

biodiversity including by incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs.

Paragraph 198 - Planning decisions should ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment.

Relevant Consultations:

Biodiversity- Initial comments requested amendment to the submitted BNG assessment and statutory metric

- In response to reconsultation on an amended BNG assessment and metric, confirmed no objection subject to conditions and informatives.

Highways DC – Initial comments expressed concern at the parking arrangements and the possibility of damage to the highway having already occurred.

- In response to reconsultation on additional information from the applicant, confirmed no objections.

Ward Councillors – no comments received

Representations

Neighbour notification letters were sent to thirty-two surrounding properties and a site notice was placed nearby giving a final date for comments of 10 December.

One representation was received raising the following material planning issues:

- Work started in July 2025 and has caused disruption to residents, including noise, air pollution and wear and tear causing deterioration of the road surface
- The school is too close to a residential area to accommodate additional persons (we are aware the school is going to become a SEND school).
- Permit parking should be offered to residents and a reduction in the speed limit to 5 or 10mph if there is to be an extension to school numbers
- The submission indicates that a PEA is unnecessary but hedgehogs (a protected species) inhabit the grounds.
- Trees and hedgerows would be more appropriate BNG than willow screening. The proximity of the site to SSSI at Worsbrough Country Park and the former Barrow Pit make this site a prime spot to encourage biodiversity.
- Can the proposal improve access to the school as vehicles are damaging the pavement and grass because of the narrow carriageway and turning provision. Measures could also be taken to block illegal parking on verges and to improve the 'one way' signage.

Assessment

The main issues for consideration are as follows:

- The acceptability of the development in principle
- The impact on the character of the area
- The impact on neighbouring residential properties
- The impact on the highway network and highways standards
- The impact on the existing trees
- The impact on the ecology of the site

For the purposes of considering the balance in this application the following planning weight is referred to in this report using the following scale unless the NPPF establishes a specific weight:

- Substantial
- Considerable
- Significant
- Moderate
- Modest
- Limited
- Little or no

Principle of development

The proposal is for the change of use of an existing caretakers bungalow into a school day nursery in the grounds of an existing primary school. The site is located in Urban Fabric where it is considered that the development is acceptable in principle subject to the following assessment.

Residential Amenity

The caretaker's bungalow is across the road from existing semi-detached houses fronting onto Lobwood, the closest part of the bungalow being 29 metres from the nearest house. The bungalow is adjacent to school play areas, the alterations to the bungalow elevations will not introduce any new openings facing the dwellings and the additional car parking provision is in existing parking and circulation areas. It is considered that the relationship between dwellings and the proposed nursery is acceptable. This reflects advice from Pollution Control that the proposal is at low risk of having an adverse effect on the health and quality of life of those living and/or working in the locality. Whilst an objection was received regarding impact of building works, this is considered to be a temporary impact only. It is concluded that the proposal is in compliance with Local Plan policy GD1 which seeks to ensure that new development will not cause a significant adverse effect on the living conditions and residential amenity of existing and future residents. Limited weight in favour of the proposal is given to this material consideration.

Impact on Trees

The application is supported by a tree survey risk report which recommends that one tree within a larger tree group on site is removed and another pruned, reflecting their condition and the degree of decay in the trees. Neither of these trees are impacted by the proposal and the proposed works reflect good tree management. It is concluded that the proposal does not conflict with Local Plan policy BIO1 in respect of the impact on trees on the site and limited weight attaches to the proposal in respect of this material consideration.

Impact on Geodiversity and Biodiversity

The application is supported by amended Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment and Metric which indicate that habitat creation and enhancement measures on site will deliver a net gain in biodiversity of 13.54%. The Council's Ecologist has advised that they have no objections subject to a condition to secure the enhancement measures, a sensitive lighting scheme and a biodiversity enhancement management plan, a Biodiversity Gain Plan condition and associated informatives. They have further advised that as none of the proposed habitats are considered to be significant, a HMMP is not required in this

Instance. Accordingly it is considered that subject to the recommended conditions, the proposal is in compliance with national and local biodiversity policy and moderate weight is given to this material consideration.

Visual amenity

The proposals involve limited external alterations to the existing building which will have a neutral impact on visual amenity. The proposed external works to extend car parking provision, create a new play area and provide new 1.2 and 2 metre fences are considered acceptable and appropriate in the context of the existing school. The proposal is considered to be in compliance with Local Plan policy D1 and limited weight is given to this material consideration.

Highway Safety

The application is supported by a submission from the applicant confirming that the vehicles associated with the external works, which are now complete, are not of a sufficient size to have caused damage to the roads around the school; and that the function of an existing turning head on site will continue to be managed on site for any larger vehicles visiting the site as it is now. Whilst the objector considered that permit parking should be introduced the submission has been accepted by the Council's Highway Engineer who has advised that there are no highway safety objections to the proposal. The submission by a local resident requesting access and highway safety interventions and parking restrictions is not justified by the scale of the proposal. It is concluded that the proposal does not conflict with Local Plan policy TC4 and limited weight attaches to the proposal in respect of this material consideration.

Site Stability

The proposal is in a Mining Remediation Authority High Risk Planning Referral area due to the possible presence of shallow coal. However, the proposal involves a change of use with minimal ground works. The application is exempt from the Coal Mining Risk Assessment requirements and it is recommended that only the Mining Remediation Informative note is attached to the decision notice. It is concluded that the proposal does not conflict with Local Plan policy CL1 in respect of the impact on site stability and limited weight attaches to the proposal in respect of this material consideration.

Greenspace

The proposal involves limited incursion into areas of green space within the site for the provision of additional parking spaces. Local Plan policy GS1 indicates that proposals that will result in the loss of green space will not normally be allowed. In this instance it is considered that the loss is minimal in the context of the remaining green space at the school, and that the biodiversity improvements that will be secured will improve the quality of the remaining green space. It is concluded that the proposal does not conflict with the Local Plan policy and limited weight attaches to the proposal in respect of this material consideration.

PLANNING BALANCE & CONCLUSION

In accordance with Paragraph 11 of the NPPF the proposal is considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The proposal is considered to be located within a sustainable location on a site suitable for the creation of early years facilities and in accordance with national policy this is given great weight in favour of the application. In addition, moderate weight attaches to the provision of biodiversity enhancements in compliance with local planning policy. Limited weight is given to the acceptable relationship

with local residents, site stability, highway safety, visual amenity, greenspace and tree issues.

Having balanced all material planning considerations, whilst objections have been received in respect to the proposal they have been suitably addressed through the information supplied and further amendments to the scheme. As a consequence, the positive aspects of the proposal outlined above are not outweighed by any other material planning considerations.

The proposal is therefore, on balance, recommended for approval

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION FOR THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS AND INFORMATIVES

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH ARTICLE 35 OF THE TOWN AND COUNTRY DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE ORDER 2015

The above objections, consideration and resulting recommendation have had due regard to Article 8 and Article 1 of the First Protocol of the European Convention for Human Rights Act 1998. The recommendation will not interfere with the applicant's and/or objector's right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence.

In dealing with the application, the Local Planning Authority has worked with the applicant to find solutions to the following issues that arose whilst dealing with the planning application:

- The need to make amendments to the submitted BNG assessment and metric
- The need to respond to highway safety concerns