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NOISE IMPACT ASSESSMENT / STATEMENT

**Proposed Change of Use from Class E(a) (Retail) to Children's Nursery (Class E (F))
Green Mill, Well I' Th' Lane, Rochdale, OL11 1BB.**

1.0 Introduction

This Noise Impact Assessment has been prepared in support of a planning application submitted to Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council for the proposed change of use of an existing three-storey commercial building to a children's nursery.

The purpose of this report is to assess the potential noise implications associated with the proposed development and to determine whether the use would give rise to unacceptable impacts on the surrounding environment, having regard to national planning policy and local environmental protection requirements.

This assessment draws upon established noise benchmarks for comparable commercial environments and applies these to the specific context and characteristics of the application site.

2.0 Existing Noise Environment

The application site is located within a mixed-use commercial area characterised by a combination of light industrial, retail, service, and leisure use. The surrounding environment is not residential in character but instead reflects a typical urban commercial setting where background noise is influenced by a range of operational activities.

Based on established data for similar environments, including the referenced assessment, typical ambient noise levels are as follows:

Daytime (07:00 – 19:00): approximately 55 to 65 dB LAeq
Evening (19:00 – 23:00): approximately 50 to 60 dB LAeq
Night-time (23:00 – 07:00): approximately 45 to 55 dB LAeq

These levels reflect a baseline noise climate generated by general business operations, vehicle movements, servicing activity, and background road traffic.

The site's proximity to established commercial routes and active uses means that it already operates within a moderate and consistent ambient noise environment, where intermittent peaks associated with vehicle movement and operational activity are commonplace.

3.0 Existing Lawful Use and Baseline Comparison

A key consideration in assessing noise impact is the lawful fallback position of the site. The building currently benefits from planning permission for retail and warehouse use, which inherently allows for a range of noise-generating activities including:

- Customer footfall throughout the day
- Vehicle movements associated with customer parking
- Delivery and servicing operations
- Internal operational noise (handling, storage, equipment use)

Such uses are typically associated with irregular and potentially higher peak noise events, particularly during delivery periods or peak trading hours.

This establishes a baseline scenario in which the site could generate noise levels consistent with or exceeding the typical ambient ranges identified above.

4.0 Proposed Nursery Use – Noise Characteristics

The proposed nursery use introduces a fundamentally different and more controlled noise profile. The primary sources of noise associated with the development will be:

Children's play and activity (primarily internal)

Staff interaction and supervision

Short-duration vehicle movements during drop-off and pick-up

Unlike retail or warehouse uses, the nursery will not involve:

Heavy goods deliveries or industrial servicing

Mechanical handling equipment

Extended vehicle idling or turnover

Late evening or night-time operation

The nature of the use is inherently low intensity in acoustic terms, particularly when considered within the context of a commercial noise environment.

Children's play noise, while perceptible, is intermittent, short-lived, and typically occurs within internal or controlled outdoor environments. Furthermore, such noise is widely recognised in planning practice as a normal and acceptable component of community and educational uses.

5.0 Operational Hours and Temporal Impact

The nursery will operate during defined daytime hours, with activity commencing in the early morning and concluding in the early evening. Weekend operations are more limited in duration and intensity.

Importantly, there will be no late evening or night-time activity, ensuring that the development does not introduce noise during the most sensitive periods of the day.

This contrasts favourably with the lawful retail use, which could operate later into the evening and generate noise associated with customer activity and servicing.

6.0 Noise Mitigation and Control Measures

The proposed development incorporates several inherent and designed mitigation measures which ensure that noise emissions remain controlled and appropriate for the location.

The building itself, being of substantial commercial construction, provides a high level of inherent acoustic containment. Internal activities will therefore be largely contained within the building envelope, significantly limiting the transmission of noise to the surrounding area.

The management of access and movement further reduces potential noise impact. Vehicle activity will be limited to short-duration drop-off and pick-up movements, with no provision for prolonged parking or servicing operations. The introduction of a controlled pedestrian access route ensures that vehicle movements are orderly and minimised.

Operational management will also play a key role, with staff supervising arrivals and departures to ensure that activity remains calm and structured. The absence of amplified sound, external plant noise, or intensive servicing activity further reduces the potential for disturbance.

7.0 Policy Context and Compliance

The proposal has been assessed against relevant planning policy, including the National Planning Policy Framework and local environmental protection policies.

The NPPF requires that development should avoid giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life because of noise. In this case, the proposed use operates within an existing commercial noise environment and does not introduce any sources of noise that would materially exceed or conflict with that baseline.

At a local level, policies relating to environmental protection and amenity require that development does not result in unacceptable noise impacts on surrounding uses. Given the nature of the site and its context, the proposed nursery use is entirely compatible with these objectives.

8.0 Assessment and Planning Balance

When assessed in the round, the proposed development represents a reduction in potential noise impact when compared to the lawful fallback position of retail and warehouse use.

The existing noise environment is already influenced by commercial activity, and the introduction of a nursery does not materially alter this baseline. Instead, it replaces a potentially more variable and intensive noise profile with one that is predictable, managed, and limited to daytime hours.

The absence of heavy servicing activity, the containment of internal noise, and the controlled nature of external movements all contribute to a development that is acoustically appropriate for its setting.

9.0 Conclusion

The proposed change of use to a children's nursery will not give rise to unacceptable noise impacts on the surrounding environment. The development operates within an established commercial noise climate and introduces a use that is both lower in intensity and more predictable than the existing lawful use.

Appropriate operational controls and the inherent acoustic properties of the building ensure that noise emissions are effectively managed. The proposal therefore complies with national and local planning policy in respect of noise and amenity.

On this basis, the development is considered acceptable in noise terms and should not be subject to refusal on environmental health grounds.