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PLANNING STATEMENT

**Railway House Nursery
1A Railway Street
Littleborough
OL15 8AG**

Proposed Change of Use of an Attached Dwelling to Form Part of the Existing Nursery together with the Retrospective Regularisation of a Former Workshop and Garage Converted to Nursery Accommodation

1.0 Introduction

1.1

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application at Railway House Nursery, 1A Railway Street, Littleborough.

The application seeks planning permission for the change of use of an attached dwelling to form part of the existing nursery together with the retrospective regularisation of existing nursery accommodation created within a former workshop and detached garage.

The proposal represents the continued investment in an established childcare facility that has operated successfully from the site since 2014. The works have been undertaken to improve the day-to-day operation of the nursery, provide additional childcare places to meet increasing local demand and improve facilities for both children and staff, whilst making better use of the existing buildings already present on the site.

Importantly, no further external alterations form part of this application. The proposal relates principally to the continued use of existing buildings and seeks to regularise the current planning position whilst providing additional accommodation within the existing nursery complex.

1.2 Purpose of this Statement

The purpose of this Planning Statement is to assess the proposed development against the relevant provisions of the Development Plan together with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The statement considers the principle of the development together with the key planning matters likely to arise during the determination of the application, including:

- The principle of the proposed development.
- Design and appearance.
- Highway and transport considerations.
- Residential amenity.
- Heritage.
- Flood risk.
- Community need and public benefit.

Reference should also be made to the accompanying Heritage Statement and Flood Risk Statement, which provide more detailed assessments of those specific matters.

2.0 Site Description

2.1

Railway House Nursery occupies an established site on Railway Street, Littleborough, immediately to the south of Littleborough Railway Station and within easy walking distance of the town centre.

The surrounding area is mixed in character and comprises a variety of residential, commercial and community uses together with the railway station and associated infrastructure. The site occupies a sustainable location with good pedestrian links, access to public transport and established highway connections.

Although the application site lies immediately adjacent to the Littleborough Town Centre Conservation Area, it does not fall within the designated boundary. Likewise, the site itself is not a Listed Building, although there are designated heritage assets within the wider surrounding area.

As confirmed within the accompanying Flood Risk Statement, the application site lies within Flood Zone 1 and outside Flood Zones 2 and 3.

2.2 Existing Buildings

The nursery currently occupies a number of interconnected buildings which have gradually evolved to meet the operational requirements of the business.

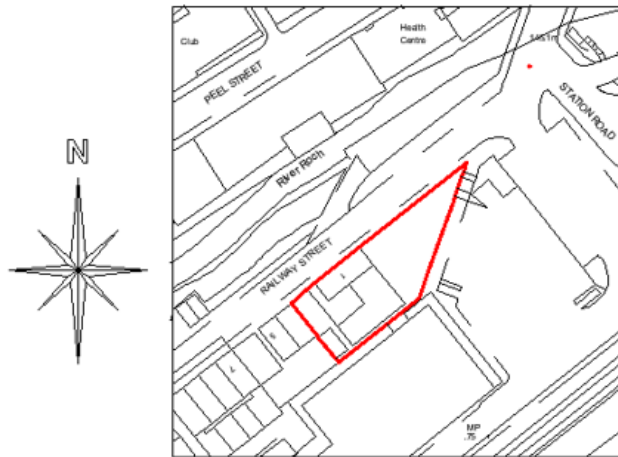
The principal nursery building comprises a two-storey property finished predominantly in white render with mock Tudor detailing to the principal elevation beneath a natural slate roof. The rear elevation is finished in render with traditional brick corbels supporting the eaves. Modern uPVC rainwater goods have been installed together with above-ground drainage.

Immediately adjoining the principal nursery building is a two-storey dwelling which forms part of the current application. The dwelling is of conventional domestic appearance with facing brickwork and pebble-dashed wall finishes beneath a pitched roof.

To the rear of the site is a former workshop which has been converted to provide additional nursery accommodation. The building is constructed in facing brick beneath an existing pitched concrete tiled roof together with a flat roof section finished in profiled metal cladding.

A former detached garage has also been converted to provide ancillary nursery accommodation.

Collectively, these buildings now operate as a single nursery facility, although the attached dwelling remains in residential use pending the determination of this application.



Scale 1:1250

SITE LOCATION PLAN

Site Location Plan





Existing Site Photographs

2.3 Existing Nursery Operation

Railway House Nursery has operated successfully from the site since 2014 and has established itself as an important childcare provider serving Littleborough and the surrounding area.

The nursery currently has an Ofsted registered capacity of **45 children** and employs **15 members of staff**.

Existing accommodation comprises:

Area	Existing Capacity
Main Nursery Room & Conservatory	22 Children
Toddler Room	14 Children
First Floor Baby Room	9 Children
Total Registered Capacity	45 Children

The nursery has developed steadily over the last decade in response to increasing local demand and changing childcare requirements. More recently, the introduction of funded childcare from nine months of age has significantly increased demand for baby places, resulting in continued pressure on the existing accommodation.

The nursery currently operates with a waiting list of approximately **20 children** and has, on occasions, been unable to accommodate further enquiries due to capacity restrictions.

This demonstrates that the proposal is not intended to create a new childcare facility, but rather to enable an established and successful nursery to continue meeting the needs of local families.

3.0 Nursery History and Evolution

The nursery first opened in 2014 and has operated continuously from the site since that time.

As with many established childcare providers, the layout of the nursery has gradually evolved in response to operational requirements, changes in childcare legislation and increasing demand for places.

During 2025, the former workshop and detached garage were converted to provide additional nursery accommodation, including a dedicated toddler room, office accommodation and a glazed link connecting the various parts of the nursery.

These works were undertaken following funding provided by Rochdale Local Authority to assist in meeting increasing demand for childcare places, particularly for younger children eligible for funded early years provision.

The applicant understood that planning permission was not required for these works and, in view of the funding timescales attached to the Local Authority grant, the project was completed to ensure that additional childcare places could be made available for the September intake. Following subsequent review of the planning position, the applicant has elected to regularise the existing situation through the submission of this planning application.

The current application also seeks permission to incorporate the attached dwelling into the nursery operation. This will allow the accommodation to function as a single, integrated childcare facility whilst making more efficient use of the existing buildings already present on the site.

4.0 Need for the Development

4.1

Railway House Nursery has operated successfully since 2014 and has established itself as an important childcare provider serving Littleborough and the surrounding area. During this time, demand for nursery places has continued to increase, particularly for babies and younger children.

The expansion of Government-funded childcare, which now includes eligible children from nine months of age, has significantly increased demand for early years provision. This has allowed more parents to return to work but has also placed additional pressure on existing nursery providers.

The applicant has experienced this increased demand first hand. The nursery currently operates a waiting list of approximately **20 children** and has, on a number of occasions, been unable to accommodate further enquiries due to the lack of available space. Discussions with other local childcare providers indicate that baby places are particularly limited across the Littleborough area.

In response to this demand, the applicant has sought to make better use of the existing buildings on the site rather than seeking new premises elsewhere. In planning terms, this represents a sustainable approach by improving an existing community facility within an established location.

4.2 Existing Constraints

Although the nursery has operated successfully for many years, the existing accommodation has gradually become restrictive as childcare requirements have evolved.

The current layout limits the flexibility of the nursery and places pressure on both childcare accommodation and staff welfare facilities. The existing staff room is relatively small and, once staff belongings are stored, offers limited space for breaks or day-to-day welfare needs.

Similarly, increasing demand for baby places has placed additional pressure on the existing first-floor accommodation. Whilst the current baby room operates safely within its registered capacity, there is limited flexibility to create the quieter and more settled environment that younger children benefit from.

These operational issues are not unusual for long-established nurseries that have expanded over time. The current proposal provides an opportunity to improve the internal arrangement of the buildings without altering their external appearance or extending the developed footprint of the site.

4.3 Responding to Local Demand

The proposal will increase the registered capacity of the nursery from **45 children to 55 children**, representing an increase of ten places.

Whilst this increase is relatively modest, it will make a meaningful contribution towards meeting local demand for childcare.

Importantly, the proposal focuses on providing additional accommodation for younger children, where demand is currently greatest. The creation of two dedicated baby rooms will enable children to be cared for in smaller groups whilst providing additional places for families seeking childcare following the introduction of funded provision from nine months of age.

The proposal therefore responds directly to an identified need within the local community rather than creating capacity without justification.

5.0 Description of the Proposed Development

5.1 Overview

The application comprises two distinct elements which together create a more efficient and practical arrangement for the continued operation of the nursery.

The first element seeks retrospective planning permission for existing nursery accommodation created within a former workshop and detached garage together with the glazed link connecting these buildings.

The second element proposes the change of use of the attached dwelling to form part of the existing nursery.

Collectively, these works will allow the nursery to operate from a single integrated facility whilst making better use of buildings that already exist on the site.

No further external alterations are proposed as part of this application.

5.2 Retrospective Regularisation

The retrospective element relates to the conversion of the former workshop to provide a dedicated toddler room together with associated nursery accommodation, the conversion of the former detached garage and the glazed link connecting the buildings.

These works were completed during 2025 following grant funding provided by Rochdale Local Authority.

The buildings are already in use as part of the nursery and this application seeks to regularise their planning status.

The proposal does not seek approval for further alterations to these buildings, and their existing external appearance will remain unchanged.

5.3 Change of Use of the Attached Dwelling

The attached dwelling currently forms a separate residential unit adjoining the existing nursery.

Its incorporation into the nursery will allow the accommodation to function more efficiently whilst improving the quality of facilities available to children and staff.

At ground floor level, the existing domestic accommodation will provide additional nursery space together with the principal kitchen serving the nursery.

The existing staircase will be retained, providing staff access between floors whilst also forming part of the means of escape strategy.

At first floor level, the proposal creates an additional dedicated baby room linked directly to the existing baby accommodation. New changing facilities will improve day-to-day operation, whilst the former bathroom and bedroom will become a dedicated staff room, separate WC and laundry area.

The proposed layout has been developed to improve the practical operation of the nursery rather than simply increasing capacity.

5.4 Staff Welfare and Safeguarding

Although planning applications often focus on additional floorspace, an important aspect of this proposal is the improvement to staff welfare and the day-to-day operation of the nursery.

The existing staff facilities are limited and do not provide sufficient space for staff to take breaks or store personal belongings comfortably.

The proposed staff room, together with dedicated welfare facilities and laundry space, provides a significant improvement for employees whilst allowing operational activities to take place away from children's play areas.

The proposal also introduces a dedicated staff entrance and exit.

This allows staff to begin and end their shifts without returning through nursery rooms after handing over responsibility for their key children. In practice, this reduces unnecessary movement through childcare areas, improves safeguarding arrangements and creates a calmer environment at the beginning and end of the day.

These improvements represent genuine operational benefits that support both the wellbeing of staff and the quality of childcare provided.

5.5 Public Benefits

Whilst the proposal results in a modest increase in nursery capacity, its wider benefits extend beyond the additional childcare places created.

The proposal will:

- provide ten additional childcare places within an established nursery;
- increase the availability of baby places where demand is currently greatest;
- improve the internal operation of the nursery;
- provide dedicated staff welfare facilities;
- improve safeguarding through better internal circulation;
- make better use of existing buildings;
- support local families seeking childcare;
- assist parents returning to work following the expansion of funded childcare; and
- secure the continued long-term operation of an established community facility.

Taken together, these represent clear planning benefits that weigh positively in favour of the proposal.

6.0 Planning History

A review of Rochdale Council's online planning records has identified limited planning history directly relating to the current nursery buildings.

The nursery has operated successfully from the site for over ten years and the current application provides an opportunity to regularise the planning position of accommodation that has evolved in response to operational requirements and increasing demand.

The application should therefore be considered on its own planning merits having regard to the Development Plan, the National Planning Policy Framework and the supporting technical information submitted alongside the application.

7.0 Planning Policy

7.1 Development Plan

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

In this instance, the relevant planning policies are contained within the Rochdale Development Plan together with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The proposal has been assessed against those policies considered most relevant to the development rather than reproducing policy wording in full.

7.2 National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework places considerable emphasis on supporting sustainable development and ensuring that planning decisions assist in creating healthy, inclusive communities.

The Framework recognises the importance of retaining and improving community facilities where they continue to serve local needs. It also encourages the effective use of previously developed land and existing buildings, provided development does not give rise to unacceptable impacts.

The proposal reflects these objectives by making more efficient use of an existing nursery rather than creating a new facility elsewhere. The application enables additional childcare provision within an established location that is well related to public transport, surrounding residential areas and local services.

Importantly, the proposal does not introduce additional built form or materially alter the external appearance of the site. The development therefore represents sustainable growth within an existing community facility.

7.3 Rochdale Development Plan

The proposal has been considered against the relevant policies of the adopted Development Plan.

In broad terms these policies seek to ensure that development:

- supports sustainable communities;
- protects neighbouring amenity;
- is appropriate to its surroundings;
- provides safe access;
- safeguards heritage assets;
- manages flood risk appropriately; and
- contributes positively to the borough.

In my view, the proposal satisfies each of these objectives.

The nursery has operated successfully from the site for over ten years and the proposed development allows that facility to continue evolving in response to changing local needs without giving rise to unacceptable planning impacts.

8.0 Planning Assessment

8.1 Principle of Development

The principle of nursery use at the site is already well established.

This application does not introduce a new educational use into the area. Instead, it seeks to improve the operation of an existing nursery by making better use of buildings that already exist within the site.

The proposal also responds directly to a clearly identified demand for childcare places.

Evidence submitted with this application demonstrates that the nursery currently operates a waiting list of approximately twenty children and has been required to refuse further admissions because of limited capacity.

The proposal will increase the registered capacity from 45 to 55 children. Whilst this represents a relatively modest increase, it will assist in meeting local demand, particularly for younger children where shortages are currently most evident.

The proposal therefore supports an established community facility whilst helping to address an identified local need.

8.2 Design and Appearance

One of the most notable aspects of this application is that it proposes no further external alterations.

The existing nursery building, attached dwelling, former workshop and former garage will all retain their current external appearance.

Existing roof forms, external materials, windows, doors, rainwater goods and boundary treatments remain unchanged.

Similarly, there are no proposals to alter existing levels, extend the built footprint or introduce additional hardstanding.

The character of the site as experienced from Railway Street will therefore remain exactly as existing.

Given the absence of external alterations, it is considered that the proposal preserves the existing appearance of the site and integrates comfortably within its surroundings.

8.3 Community Benefits

The proposal delivers benefits that extend beyond the physical alteration of buildings.

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Director, Christine Susan Smith.

Railway House Nursery provides an important service to families living within Littleborough and the surrounding area.

The expansion of funded childcare has significantly increased demand for nursery places, particularly for babies and younger children. The applicant has demonstrated that existing demand already exceeds available capacity and that families have had to be turned away.

Increasing the registered capacity by ten children will help address this shortfall whilst supporting parents returning to employment following the introduction of extended childcare funding.

The proposal therefore represents an investment in community infrastructure rather than simply an increase in floorspace.

8.4 Efficient Use of Existing Buildings

National planning policy encourages the efficient use of land and buildings wherever possible.

Rather than constructing a new nursery elsewhere, the proposal adapts buildings already present within the site.

This represents a sustainable approach by extending the useful life of existing buildings whilst avoiding unnecessary demolition or additional land take.

In planning terms this is considered preferable to new development on previously undeveloped land.

8.5 Staff Welfare and Operational Improvements

Whilst staff welfare is not normally a primary planning consideration, the operational improvements resulting from the proposal contribute positively towards the continued successful operation of the nursery.

The proposed staff room, welfare facilities, laundry and separate WC provide accommodation that is more appropriate for the number of employees now working within the nursery.

The dedicated staff entrance and exit also improve the internal circulation of the building by reducing unnecessary movement through children's activity areas.

These improvements contribute towards safeguarding, improve operational efficiency and create a more practical working environment without affecting neighbouring properties or the surrounding area.

8.6 Residential Amenity

The application does not propose any extensions or further external alterations.

As a consequence there will be:

- no additional overlooking;
- no loss of privacy;
- no additional overshadowing;
- no increase in visual impact;
- no loss of daylight; and
- no change to existing boundary relationships.

The proposal simply makes better use of accommodation already present within the site.

Whilst the nursery capacity increases modestly, the site will continue operating as an established childcare facility.

The day-to-day character of the use therefore remains unchanged and the proposal is not expected to result in any material impact upon neighbouring residential amenity.

8.7 Highway Considerations

A separate Transport Statement accompanies this application and considers highway matters in greater detail.

Nevertheless, several points are particularly relevant.

The nursery occupies a highly sustainable location immediately adjacent to Littleborough Railway Station and within comfortable walking distance of the town centre.

Many members of staff travel by walking, cycling or public transport, with only approximately one-third travelling by private car.

Many children attending the nursery also live locally and a significant proportion of families already have siblings attending the nursery.

Drop-off and collection times are naturally staggered throughout the morning and afternoon, reducing peak demand on the surrounding highway network.

Taken together, these factors indicate that the modest increase in nursery capacity is unlikely to generate a material increase in vehicle movements.

Furthermore, the proposal does not alter the existing vehicular access, parking arrangements or internal circulation.

Consequently, there are no highway reasons why planning permission should not be granted.

8.8 Heritage

A separate Heritage Statement has been prepared in support of this application and should be read alongside this Planning Statement.

Although the application site lies immediately adjacent to the Littleborough Town Centre Conservation Area, it does not fall within the designated Conservation Area boundary. Likewise, the application buildings are not listed, although there are designated heritage assets within the wider surrounding area.

The proposal does not involve any further external alterations to the buildings forming part of the application. Existing elevations, roof forms, materials, windows, doors and boundary treatments all remain unchanged.

As a consequence, the proposal does not alter the way the site is viewed from Railway Street or from within the Conservation Area. Similarly, there will be no change to the setting or appreciation of nearby Listed Buildings.

The accompanying Heritage Statement concludes that the proposal preserves both the setting of nearby designated heritage assets and the character and appearance of the Littleborough Town Centre Conservation Area. Having considered the findings of that assessment, I agree with that conclusion.

Accordingly, it is considered that the proposal satisfies the heritage objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework together with the statutory duties placed upon the Local Planning Authority when determining applications affecting the setting of heritage assets.

8.9 Flood Risk

Flood risk has been considered within the accompanying Flood Risk Statement.

The Environment Agency Flood Map confirms that the application site lies within Flood Zone 1 and therefore within the area of lowest probability of fluvial flooding.

The proposal comprises the continued use of existing buildings together with the change of use of the attached dwelling. No new operational development is proposed.

There are no alterations to:

- existing finished floor levels;
- external ground levels;

- drainage infrastructure;
- existing hardstanding;
- existing soft landscaping; or
- surface water drainage arrangements.

As the proposal does not alter the physical characteristics of the site, there is no mechanism by which flood risk could increase either within the application site or elsewhere.

In my view, flood risk does not present any constraint to the proposed development.

8.10 Sustainability

One of the principal objectives of the planning system is to encourage the efficient use of land and buildings.

Rather than seeking to relocate or construct new nursery accommodation elsewhere, the applicant has chosen to invest in buildings that already exist on the site.

The proposal extends the useful life of these buildings and allows them to continue serving the local community whilst avoiding unnecessary demolition or additional land take.

The site also occupies a sustainable location immediately adjacent to Littleborough Railway Station, within walking distance of the town centre and served by existing footways and public transport.

Many staff already travel by walking, cycling or public transport, reducing reliance upon the private car.

Taken together, these factors demonstrate that the proposal represents a sustainable form of development in accordance with the broad objectives of national planning policy.

8.11 Economic Benefits

Although relatively modest in scale, the proposal delivers a number of economic benefits.

The nursery currently employs fifteen members of staff and the proposal will support the creation of an additional full-time post.

More importantly, the proposal enables parents to access additional childcare provision, allowing many to return to employment following the expansion of Government-funded childcare.

The nursery also represents continued investment in an established local business which has served the community since 2014.

The improvements secured through this application provide confidence for the continued operation of the nursery whilst supporting local employment and contributing positively towards the local economy.

8.12 Planning Balance

When determining planning applications, the Local Planning Authority is required to consider both the benefits of a proposal and any resulting harm.

Having undertaken that assessment, I consider the planning balance in this instance to weigh clearly in favour of granting planning permission.

The proposal supports an established nursery that has operated successfully for over ten years and responds directly to a clearly identified demand for additional childcare places.

Evidence accompanying the application demonstrates an existing waiting list together with continued pressure on baby provision arising from recent changes to Government-funded childcare.

Against this background, the proposal provides ten additional childcare places together with improved accommodation for babies, enhanced staff welfare facilities and a more practical internal arrangement that supports safeguarding and the day-to-day operation of the nursery.

Importantly, these benefits are achieved without extending the developed footprint of the site or introducing further external alterations.

The proposal does not adversely affect neighbouring residential amenity, highway safety, flood risk, heritage assets or the character of the surrounding area.

Having considered the application as a whole, I have identified no adverse planning impacts that would significantly or demonstrably outweigh the benefits arising from the development.

9.0 Conclusion

Railway House Nursery has become an established and valued childcare provider within Littleborough, serving local families for over a decade.

The current application represents the continued evolution of that facility in response to increasing demand for childcare places and changing operational requirements.

The proposal seeks to regularise existing nursery accommodation together with the change of use of the attached dwelling, allowing the nursery to operate more efficiently whilst making better use of buildings already present on the site.

The additional accommodation will provide ten further childcare places, improve baby provision, create better staff welfare facilities and strengthen the day-to-day operation of the nursery.

Equally important is what the proposal does **not** do.

It does not introduce further external alterations.

It does not increase the physical footprint of the buildings.

It does not alter the surrounding highway network.

It does not affect neighbouring residential amenity.

It does not harm the character of the surrounding area, nearby heritage assets or the adjacent Conservation Area.

It does not increase flood risk.

Taken together, the proposal represents a logical and sustainable development that supports an established community facility whilst responding to an identified local need.

In my opinion, the application complies with the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework together with the relevant policies of the Rochdale Development Plan.

For these reasons, it is respectfully considered that planning permission should be granted.