

Design and Access Statement and Heritage Impact Assessment

Windmill Nursery
22-23 Overcliffe, Gravesend, Kent, DA11 0EH.



Image from Google Street View. October 2024

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CONTENTS

Page No.

• Introduction	3
• Design	4
• Access	6
• Historical impact	7

INTRODUCTION

This Design & Access Statement has been produced by CMC Projects LLP on behalf of Windmill Nursery, to accompany a full planning application for the proposed garden building to be installed at the existing children's nursery. The development site comprises of an existing children's nursery housed in two Victorian townhouses joined at first floor level with a glazed link. It has car parking at the front and a large garden area to the rear which currently occupies a site area of 1261.4 sqm.

The nursery is operating at capacity for its current allowable numbers of children and due to local demand for nursery places growing, has a waiting list for children wanting to attend the nursery and benefit from its provision allowing working families early development of their children prior to attending school.

The site comprises of two, two-storey properties adjoined by a glass link at first floor level. It is afforded with direct access to the main road – Overcliffe – where vehicles can drive in or out of separate entrance and exit points. This car parking area has a number of spaces for staff parking and parent drop-off right in front of the nursery entrance.

The site is not located within a Flood Risk area and is not at risk of flooding.

The proposals would not affect any trees located on or around the site.

The site is within the Overcliffe conservation area which is designated for its historic and architectural value, however the nursery buildings are not listed on Historic England's database.

DESIGN

The proposal is designed to alleviate the currently oversubscribed nursery and bring down the waiting list. It is intended to construct a new single storey cabin building in the rear South-west corner of the existing large garden area. This cabin will provide additional capacity for age ranges between 3-5 years. This allows the rooms inside the nursery to distribute the children to the appropriate rooms to suit their level of learning and assistance required. Using the garden space to construct a purpose-built cabin allows the integrity of the existing buildings to be retained and not extended or over-developed.

The proposed cabin will have facilities for the children to learn independence for toileting and will provide free-flow access to the garden area for experimental play over different environments. A staff WC is also intended for the cabin to ensure the staff do not need to break the ratio for care when needing the facilities themselves. This allows the cabin to be an independent learning space for 31 children of 3-5 years preparing them for the next stage of learning which would be attending school.

This cabin building will allow one age group to be housed in a single area rather than split between smaller rooms and encourage movement and independence. By having this cabin building for child use will also allow the existing building to be re-configured by age ranges to make sure they get the best use out of the space they currently have. The elevation is afforded with large bi-fold doors to maximise the intake of natural light into the room with an additional door and window for access, and windows into the remaining garden space. Windows to the boundary side elevation will all be obscure type glazing to prevent overlooking. The appearance of the proposed cabin would be a timber patterned plank system with felt roof to reduce the impact of the building on the surrounding area retaining a garden building look. This helps to reduce the impact on the conservation area keeping the building low in height and using materials that are not out of place within the surrounding townscape.

The proposed building will not impact the current environmental features within the garden and shows a considered and sustainable response to a developed need for further child spaces at this popular nursery setting. Additional habitats will be included on-site for new bird and bat boxes to be installed to encourage the existing wildlife to thrive in the area.

Access to the proposed building has been designed to be inclusive with an access ramp and large openings to encourage children's interaction with the outside world and existing garden spaces.

ACCESS

The position of the nursery also has good access to sustainable transport modes. There are good walking routes and access to public transport such as close bus routes (one is directly opposite the nursery) and a nearby train station just 0.4 mile away. A main road runs past the nursery; this road also gives access to the retail park and amenities close by which all have large car parks if there is no drop-off space on-site. The advantage of the nursery is they have staggered drop-off and collection times which avoids peak rush times as parents arrive at different times during the day and are only on-site for a few minutes. The limited time that parents are parked and staggered timings results in minimal impact on the road network and surrounding area. The drop-off area in front of the nursery allows a safer transition for the children going into and out of nursery. The position of the nursery also has good access to sustainable transport modes.

The existing access arrangements will not be altered by the proposals.

No works are proposed to the car park, however improvements maybe undertaken to the remaining garden area following the proposed works including the installation of bird and bat boxes as recommended.

HISTORICAL IMPACT

As noted, the location of the existing nursery is within the Overcliffe conversation area and the existing building retains its architectural appearance of the Victorian era with the two building being joined by a glazed link. There are no proposals to alter the existing building to maintain their appearance and the historical impact is unchanged from the street scene.

The proposed single storey cabin has been considerate to the conservation area, being kept low height, maintaining the existing trees and environmental features and giving the appearance of a garden building means to impact is restricted with no overlooking issues.

In conclusion the proposals have no adverse effect on the conservation area or historical impact of the area, however it will provide a much-needed increase in child spaces for the nursery and support for families in the local area.