

PLANNING SUPPORTING STATEMENT

location	The Learning Tree, 26 Broad Lane, Holmfirth, HD9 3JS
application	Erection of Single Storey Extension to Educational Building
client/applicant	The Learning Tree
job number	24/1065
date	November 2025 Rev. A March 2026

Ltd

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INTRODUCTION

This Planning Supporting Statement is submitted in support of a planning application for the proposed extension to The Learning Tree Nursery, 26 Broad Lane, Holmfirth, HD9 3JS.

The purpose of this statement is to set out the rationale for the proposed development, to demonstrate how it complies with relevant local and national planning policy, and to highlight the social, economic and community benefits that the proposals deliver.

The Learning Tree Nursery is a long-established early years education provider that plays a key role in supporting families within the Upperthong, Holmfirth and wider Holme Valley area. The proposal seeks to extend the existing premises to slightly increase capacity and improve facilities, ensuring the nursery can continue to meet the growing demand for high-quality childcare provision.

The community role of The Learning Tree Nursery in Upperthong must be seen in the context of local population and service need. Census-based locality data shows Upperthong to be a small but growing settlement with a substantial proportion of young families and children in the local population. Recent local population breakdowns demonstrate that almost one in five residents are aged under 18, and there are close to one hundred children aged 0–9 in the village, reflecting a clear local user base for early years provision. These local demographic indicators sit alongside Kirklees Council's own sufficiency assessments which identify that, across the borough and in wards with housing growth, there remain gaps between available Ofsted-registered places and projected demand for early years places. The council's [2024 sufficiency evidence](#) identifies the number of registered places across Kirklees and sets out estimated demand gaps for the extended entitlements, demonstrating a boroughwide need for additional, accessible provision of the kind proposed here.

LOCATION

The site is located to the north of Broad Lane in Upperthong, Holmfirth, Huddersfield, approximately 1 mile to the West of Holmfirth town centre.

The application site comprises the existing nursery premises and its associated outdoor play space. The building is located within a predominantly residential area, which serves well for the local community and ensures reliance on motor vehicles for dropping and collecting children from the setting is not 'the norm'. The application site is easily accessible via local roads, footpaths and public transport. The location benefits from safe pedestrian access and some on-site parking.

Holmfirth and particularly Upperthong has experienced significant residential growth in recent years, particularly as new housing developments have come forward on the edges of the town. This growth has contributed to an increasing demand given the increased number of young families in the locality, thereby creating heightened demand for high quality, accessible and flexible childcare provision. The Learning Tree Nursery serves this catchment and has reached a point where the existing accommodation severely limits its ability to meet the demand.

Recent residential development within the Upperthong village includes, but not limited to;

- 13 dwellings on the land just over the boundary to the West on Upper Croft (Holroyd Homes).
- 3 new detached dwellings directly adjacent to the application site (Mr S Hobson).
- 4 new dwellings across the road from the application site (Anthony Dearnley Homes Ltd).
- 27 new dwellings on land to the North of the application site, off Pennine Close, Holme View Drive and Upperthong Lane (Conroy Brook (Developments) Ltd).
- 8 new dwellings (Little Croft Close) (HH Services Ltd).
- 4 new dwellings adj to the Moorings Binns Lane (M Jenkinson).
- 2 detached dwellings adj to 29 Burnlee Road (Messrs Doherty & Farrar)

The above are in addition to the other recent one off new build dwellings (4d Broad Lane, the new build dwelling directly behind the application site that is nearing completion, new dwelling (conversion) at New Closes Farm, new detached dwelling off Park Head Lane also nearing completion), Stonewell House off Parkhead Road, new dwellings off Binns Lane, etc, etc.

The above are predominantly family properties (4 beds+) with some of the residents already using the service provision of the Learning Tree.

The surrounding area is characterised by mixed residential and community uses, with no immediate conflicts of land use. The site is well integrated within the existing urban fabric, and the proposed extension will remain consistent with the scale, materials, and appearance of the local built environment.

PROPOSALS

The proposed extension has been conceived to secure the long-term viability of an established community facility that local families rely on and to reduce the need for parents to travel to more distant settings, providing additional places at a neighbourhood nursery has demonstrable direct benefits well beyond the immediate catchment; it improves parental access to employment and training, supports child development at an early stage, and strengthens local social infrastructure. In rural and semi-rural communities such as Upperthong, local childcare carries heightened importance because limited public transport options and local roads increase the time-cost of travelling to more distant settings.

The proposed extension therefore directly responds to the council's objective to enable healthy, active and inclusive communities by improving access to local childcare. This point of social and economic benefit is consistent with the Council's Placement Sufficiency Strategy and the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment which set out the need to prioritise locally accessible early years places where gaps are identified.

The proposed extension follows the footprint of the existing external decked area to the front of the property therefore there will be no impact or expansion of the existing built footprint. The proposals aim to provide the business with extra capacity to provide their services to an area with high demand for childcare without impacting the existing site.

The construction material will follow the existing context in being timber frame external walls with external vertical timber cladding.

The existing principal entrance will be rotated in line with the extension to create a new internal space for drop off and collection internally with a low-level wall to separate from the extended nursery space.

The proposed extension is modest in scale and designed to integrate harmoniously with the existing building. The materials and detailing reflect the established architectural character of the existing structure, ensuring the development respects its setting. The layout maintains a strong sense of openness from the created views across the valley and ensures the continued functionality and safety of outdoor play areas.

The Kirklees Childcare Sufficiency Assessment identifies a shortage of nursery places across the district, particularly in areas experiencing housing growth such as Uppershong/Holmfirth. Many local families are currently required to travel outside their immediate area to access suitable childcare, which increases car dependency and reduces local sustainability. Expanding The Learning Tree Nursery directly responds to this identified shortfall, increasing the availability of local childcare places and helping parents return to work or education.

The development will safeguard and create additional employment opportunities within the early years sector, supporting the local economy. It will also provide significant social benefits by strengthening family support networks, enabling parents to access employment, and improving early years educational outcomes – all consistent with the Council's Inclusive Growth Strategy and Local Plan objectives.

In relation to highway safety and parking, the site's location on Broad Lane means that the council and local consultees will understandably focus on potential impacts. Broad Lane serves Uppershong as a quiet, low-capacity village lane and several recently completed residential schemes and agents' descriptions identify the lane as having no through traffic and a limited daily flow. Uppershong Lane is the principal highway link through the village, Broad Lane more of a residential, rather than arterial network. This context means the impact of additional traffic from a modest nursery extension can be managed effectively through on-site measures and operational controls.

Operational measures to limit any resulting highway impact include a traffic management and travel plan for the nursery. The travel plan includes staggered drop-off and pick-up windows to spread demand over a wider period and taken together, these measures ensure peak vehicle movements are spread and minimised, that on-street congestion on Broad Lane is avoided, and that the small-scale nature of the extension does not materially worsen existing traffic conditions. It's also important to note the successful operation of the business through the construction of the recent residential developments immediately opposite and adjacent to the nursery premises, naturally the construction workforce of the adjacent/opposite developments along with large material delivery vehicles intensified vehicle movements in the immediate locality but these residential developments are now complete now which now reduces the intensity.

The Learning Tree currently accommodates approximately 75 children each week. The nursery's registered daily capacity is 47 children, with attendance distributed across the week according to a range of schedules—typically two, three, four, or five days per week. In 2020, the setting expanded through the introduction of an additional preschool building. This development enabled an increase in overall capacity and the implementation of a staggered drop-off and collection system. The system provides greater flexibility for families and ensures that charges are based on the actual hours of attendance rather than a fixed daily rate, offering a more economical structure for parents.

There are seven dedicated parking spaces located directly in front of the nursery. These spaces have been designed to allow easy access and egress, reducing the need for families to

cross the road or block the highway and therefore improving safety for young children and parents. Having said this, many of the users of the setting are locals and chose to walk their children the short distance as opposed to driving.

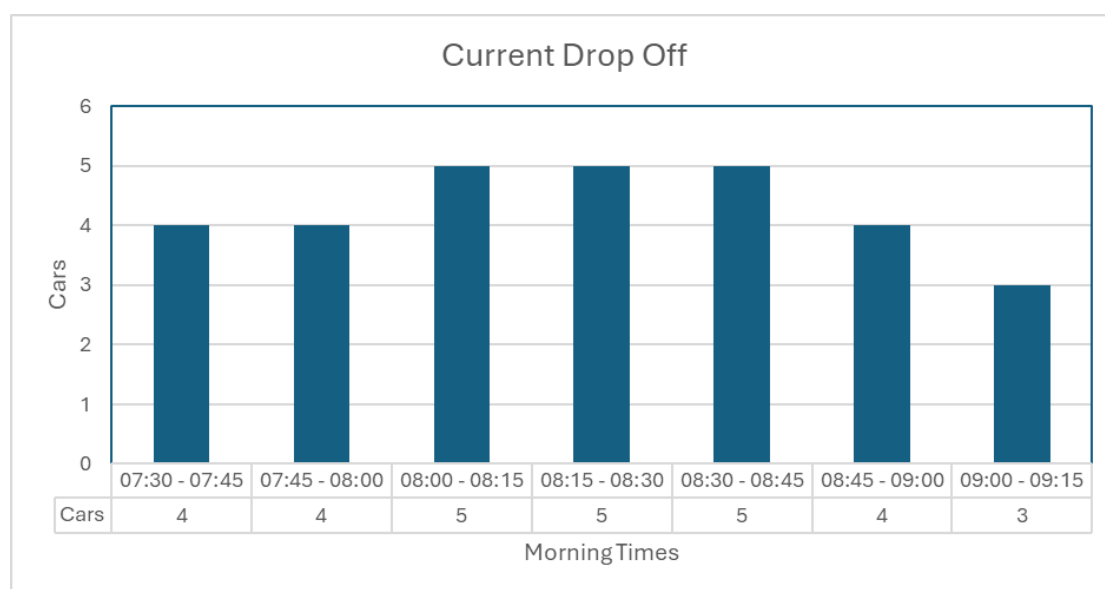
The nursery has been established within a residential area for over twenty years and has operated under its current management for the past decade. During this period, ongoing residential development has taken place in the immediate locality and nearby surrounding areas including Thongsbridge, Holmfirth, Netherthong, and Holmbridge. The vast majority of enrolled children live within the immediate Uppershong locality. Due to the nursery's proximity to these wider villages, around one in seven children regularly walk to and from the setting, NB the more local residents (Uppershong based) regularly walk to and from the setting.

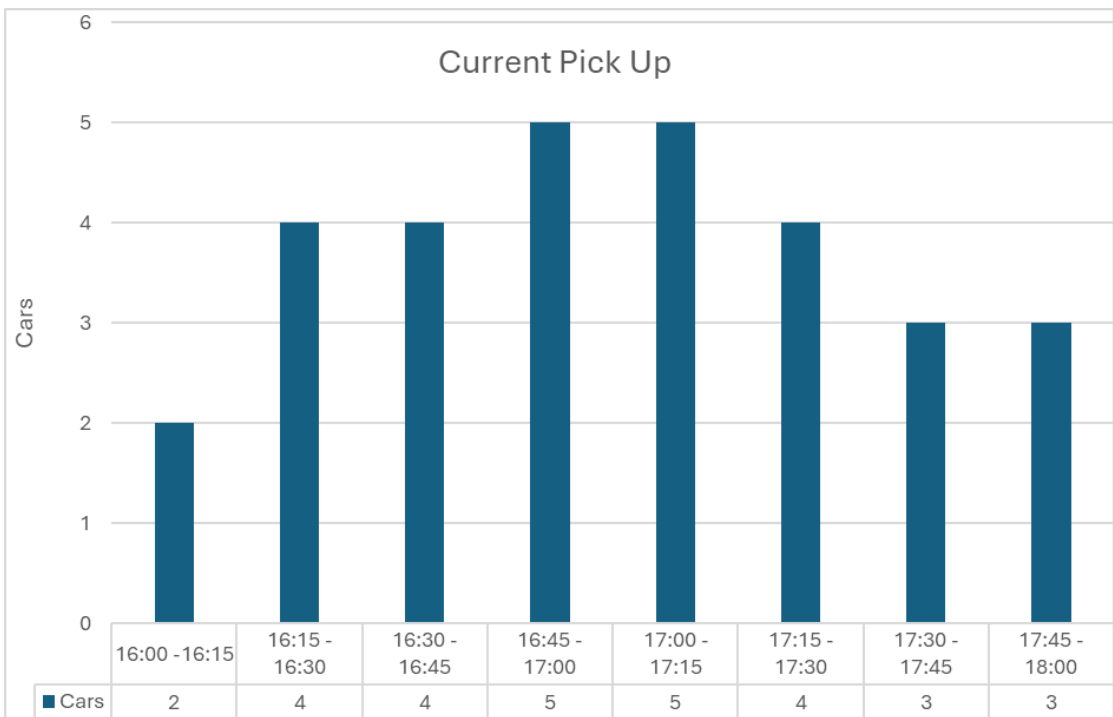
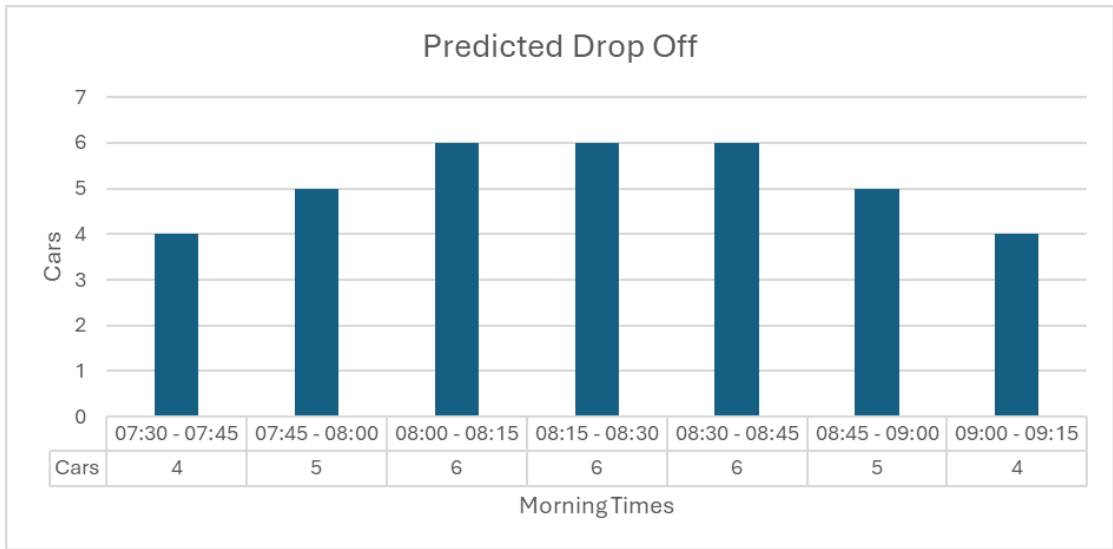
An increasing number of families now have siblings attending the nursery at the same time; currently 14 families have two or more children enrolled. This has contributed to a reduction in the overall number of vehicles used for drop-off and collection.

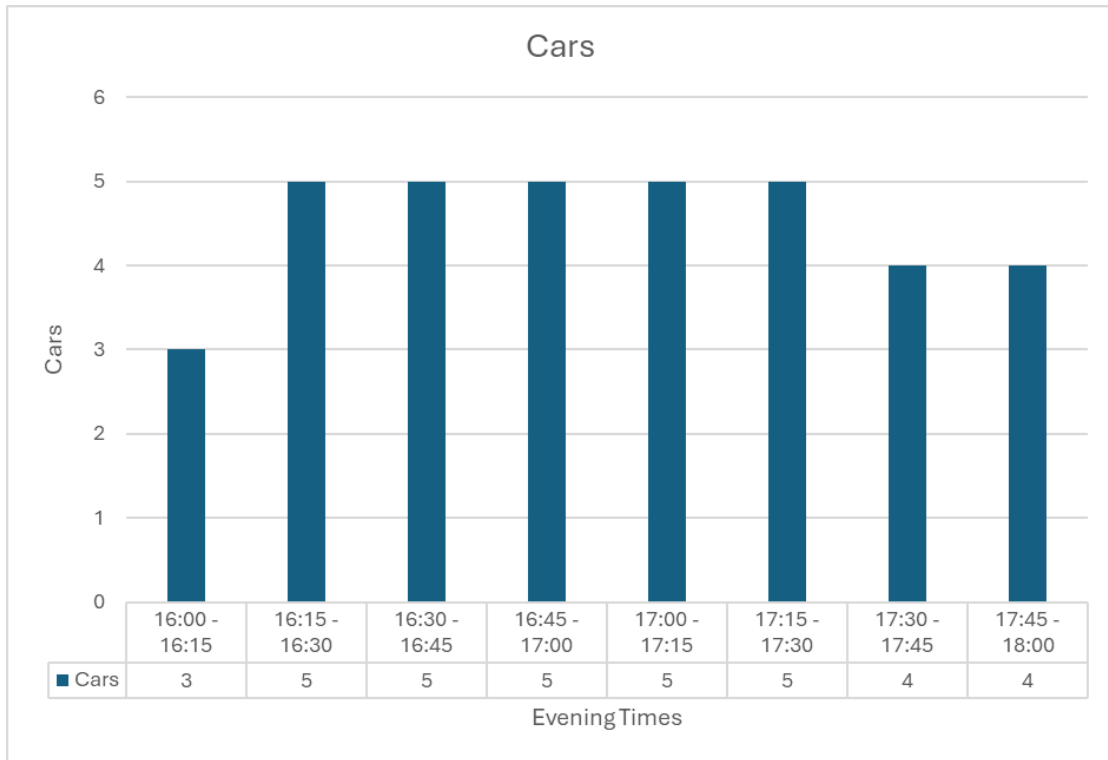
The total number of cars arriving at the nursery is lower than the number of children attending, owing to a combination of walking families, siblings travelling together, and children of staff members who arrive with their parents.

When operating at full capacity of 47 children, approximately 30 cars are observed during the morning and afternoon periods. These arrivals and departures are spread across a two-hour timeframe between 07:30–09:30 and 16:00–18:00. Currently, around 63% of all drop-off and collection activities involve the use of a car.

An assessment has been made to increase the setting's capacity by a further 10 places. Based on existing data, this expansion would result in an estimated increase of fewer than six additional cars during peak periods. The accompanying graphs provide a detailed comparison of current drop-off and collection patterns and the projected impact following an increase to a total capacity of 57 children.







PLANNING POLICY

Paragraph 100 of the NPPF highlights the significance of early years childcare and education by stating:

“It is important that a sufficient choice of early years, school and post-16 places are available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should:

a) 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; and

b) work with early years, school and post-16 promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.”

We believe that the proposals are providing a much-needed service to an area with insufficient current levels of child-based services without extending the footprint of the building or impacting on external space which is already used. It is unsustainable to develop areas providing more residential units without expecting services to also be enhanced to accommodate the new residents.

Further emphasis on this matter is also present in paragraph 101 which states:

“To ensure faster delivery of other public service infrastructure such as health, blue light, library, adult education, university and criminal justice facilities, local planning authorities should also work proactively and positively with promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to plan for required facilities and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted. Significant weight should be placed on the importance of new, expanded or upgraded public service infrastructure when considering proposals for development.”

Kirklees Local Plan Policy LP48 States:

“Community facilities should be provided in accessible locations where they can minimise the need to travel or they can be made accessible by walking, cycling and public transport. This will normally be in town, district or local centres. Proposals will be supported for development that protects, retains or enhances provision, quality or accessibility of existing community, education, leisure and cultural facilities that meets the needs of all members of the community. Where community facilities are provided as an integral part of a development, they should wherever possible be within adaptable mixed-use buildings”

The proposal seeks to protect and enhance local community facilities and supports proposals that improve the accessibility and quality of such facilities.

APPEARANCE

The following materials are proposed:

Walls	-	Timber cladding as existing
Roof	-	Flat Timber with EPDM as Existing
Rainwater Goods	-	Upvc guttering & downpipes to match existing.
Windows & Doors	-	Aluminium as Existing

MEANS OF ACCESS

The access will remain unchanged.

LAYOUT

The proposed drawings indicate the layout.

SCALE

The scale of the building will increase in line with the proposed drawings.

OTHER MATTERS

NOISE

We contend the increase will not have a detrimental impact on noise being emitted from the business. We understand there have been no noise complaints relating to this long-standing business.

ECOLOGY/BNG

The proposed extension amounts to 32m². Whilst over the 25m² threshold for BNG (Biodiversity Net Gain) the proposals are sited on the existing decked structure and therefore does not result in any impact on habitat. The proposed development is small scale and would not negatively impact or alter any habitat. The construction site area has zero habitat score.

Please note the application site is redlined up to the adopted highway which suggests a larger site area, the proposed block plan identifies the actual working site area/location of the proposed extension.

The proposals do not impact on any trees or require the removal of any trees.

CONCLUSION

The proposed extension to The Learning Tree Nursery represents a carefully designed and policy-compliant development that directly addresses an identified local need for additional childcare provision. The scheme accords with the NPPF paragraphs 100 & 101 and with key Kirklees Local Plan policies, including LP1, LP24, LP47 and LP48.

By expanding an established and valued community facility, the proposal will deliver measurable social, economic and environmental benefits to Upperthong and the wider Holme Valley area. It will enhance childcare availability, support working families, create local employment, and ensure that the nursery continues to operate within a safe, high-quality and sustainable environment.

For these reasons, it is respectfully submitted that the proposal accords with the Kirklees local plan and national planning policy and should be granted planning permission without delay.

Should any further information be required please don't hesitate to contact us.

It would be appreciated if you could contact Paul Matthews Architectural Ltd prior to drafting up your recommendation for determination.

APPENDIX A
PROPERTY PHOTOS





