



JUDITH DOUGLAS TOWN PLANNING LIMITED

Dove Syke Nursery, Eaves Hall Lane, West Bradford,
Clitheroe BB7 3JG



Retrospective application for the proposed change of use of land from agricultural to agricultural and forest pre-school and change of use of building from mixed use for agriculture, office, staff facilities and cider making to forest pre-school, agriculture, office and staff facilities.

[Planning Statement JDTPLO266](#)

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STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF A RETROSPECTIVE PLANNING APPLICATION FOR THE PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE OF LAND FROM AGRICULTURAL TO AGRICULTURAL AND FOREST PRE-SCHOOL AND CHANGE OF USE OF BUILDING FROM MIXED USE FOR AGRICULTURE, OFFICE, STAFF FACILITES AND CIDER MAKING TO FOREST PRE-SCHOOL, AGRICULTURE, OFFICE AND STAFF FACILITES.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This planning statement has been prepared by Judith Douglas Town Planning Ltd in support of full planning application in retrospect for the change of use of the land and buildings at Dove Syke Nursery in order to continue the production and sales of Christmas trees and to incorporate a forest pre-school. The forest school is known as Evergreen Forest Nursery see <http://evergreenforestnursery.com/>

1.2 This statement provides a description of the site and the proposed development, its compliance with the development plan and an assessment of other material considerations. It should be read in conjunction with the accompanying information:

6209-E00 Location Plan

6209-E01 Existing Site Plan

6209-E02 Existing Floor Plan

6209-P01 Proposed Site Plan

6209-P02 Proposed Floor Plan

2.0 THE APPLICATION SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

2.1 Dove Syke Nursery is situated on the west side of Eaves Hall Lane and comprises 22 acres of land 11 acres of which is owned by the applicant and 11 which is rented, a portal framed building and a block work building and a car park. The site has and established Christmas tree business growing Christmas trees at the site.

2.2 Vehicle access is off Eaves Hall Lane an adopted highway and along a private track which serves Dove Skye Nursery, Dove Syke House and Dove Syke Barn. To the south east of the site along Eaves Hall Lane is Three Rivers Caravan Site and Eaves Hall Hotel and wedding venue.

- 2.3 The site is within an area designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the Council's Housing and Economic Development, Development Plan Document. (HEDDPD). It is outside any defined settlement boundary and within an area of open countryside.

3.0 SITE HISTORY

- 3.1 The planning applications below are listed on the Council's website relating to the site. These applications were made by the previous owners of the site. The main planning permission relevant to the site is 3/2012/0870 shown in bold.

App No.	Address	Development	Decision
3/2005/0650	Dove Syke Nursery Eaves Hall Lane West Bradford Lancashire	Extension of existing storage shed to provide a covered loading area.	Approved with conditions date : 26/08/2005
3/2005/0646	Dove Syke Nursery Eaves Hall Lane West Bradford Lancashire	Office building with staff changing/washroom facilities and storage for existing nursery. 99sq.m. area.	Withdrawn decision date : 18/10/2005
3/2005/1055	Dove Syke Nursery Eaves Hall Lane West Bradford Lancashire	Agricultural building to house office, workers' amenities and planting & loading facilities.	Approved with conditions date : 08/02/2006
3/2007/0603	Dove Syke Nursery Eaves Hall Lane West Bradford Lancashire	Agricultural building to house office & staff facilities. Application to leave building 'C' standing.	Approved with conditions date : 15/08/2007
3/2012/0870	Dove Syke Nursery Eaves Hall Lane West Bradford Lancashire	Change of use of an agricultural building with office and staff facilities to mixed use for agricultural, office, staff facilities, and cider making (retrospective).	Approved with conditions date : 19/07/2013
3/2014/0389	Dove Syke Nursery Eaves Hall Lane West Bradford Lancashire	Change of Use of part of a mixed use building currently used for agricultural, office, staff facilities and cider making for use as a holiday cottage.	Withdrawn decision date : 26/06/2014

3/2016/0558	Dove Syke Nursery Eaves Hall Lane West Bradford Lancashire	Prior approval sought for (Class q (a) and (b)) for the change of use of an agricultural building to a dwelling house (Class 3) and for associated operational development for an agricultural building at Dove Syke Nursey, Moor Lane, West Bradford.	Refused date : 10/08/2016
3/2016/0853	Dove Syke Nursery Eaves Hall Lane West Bradford Lancashire	Change of use from storage building to dwelling house.	Refused Date : 14/11/2016

4.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The applicants purchased the site in 2017 as an existing Christmas tree business and continue to grow Christmas trees for wholesale and retail from the site including Christmas wreaths. They also have bee hives and produce honey.
- 4.2 In the summer of 2019 the applicant ran successful parent and child 'forest school' sessions. This led to the establishing of a forest school in January 2020 which has pre-school places for 10 children and operates from 9am to 3pm five days per week. The school has three full-time members of staff, a student placement plus a part time cook. The school has been Ofstead registered since September 2019.
- 4.3 The principle of a forest school is that the children's learning experience takes place outside. The school uses outdoor spaces for different learning activities. The inside of main building is not used as a teaching space unless the weather is extremely poor. The area outside beneath the canopy is used for some activities. The building provides toilets and office for the forest school and tree nursery, and a kitchen to prepare meals for the children and as a staff rest facility for all workers on site at the pre-school, the tree nursery and the Christmas trees business. The accommodation on the first floor is used for staff facilities.
- 4.4 The application seeks permission to retain the recently established forest school alongside the existing agricultural use of the land for Christmas tree production and sales.
- 4.5 The forest school currently operates five days per week and provides pre-school education for 2 to 5-year olds. The government provides funding for nursery school places for some two-year olds and all pre-school children over three years old up to 30 hours per week. The applicant wishes to continue to operate 5 day per week.

- 4.6 The applicant has 12 years' experience in providing early years child-care and runs a childcare facility in Accrington for 12 children. She is a Governor at Fairfield Nursery School in Accrington. The facility at Accrington was Ofsted Inspected in 2018 and rated outstanding. She has NVQ Level 6 Early Years Education, outdoor paediatric first aid training and is a Safeguarding Leader amongst other qualifications. She has also completed one year of training and holds a qualification as a Forest School Leader level 3.
- 4.7 The application is in retrospect. The applicant has been able to test whether the concept of a forest school appeals to parents and the school has been in operation since January 2020 starting with 4 children and soon reaching 10 children per day. The school closed for 2 months at the beginning of the Covid 19 outbreak and re-opened on the 7th June 2020. There is currently a waiting list for places.

5 DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY

- 5.1 The Development Plan for the purposes of this application comprises the Ribble Valley Core Strategy (adopted 2014) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2018).

Core Strategy (2014)

- 5.2 The following policies are of relevance to the proposal:

Ribble Valley Core Strategy:

Key Statement DS1: Development Strategy
Key Statement DS2: Sustainable Development
Key Statement EN2: Landscape
Key Statement EC1: Business and Employment Development
Key Statement DMI2: Transport Considerations
Policy DMG1: General Considerations
Policy DMG2: Strategic Considerations
Policy DMG3: Transport and Mobility
Policy DME2: Landscape and Townscape Protection
Policy DMB1: Supporting Business Growth and the Local Economy
Policy DMB2: The Conversion of Barns and Other Rural Buildings for Employment Uses

National Planning Policy Framework.

- 5.3 Section 6 Supporting a prosperous rural economy.

Paragraph 83 states:

“Planning policies and decisions should enable:

- a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of businesses in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;*
- b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;”*

Paragraph 84 states:

“Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that the development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport.)”

Section 8: Promoting healthy and safe communities.

Paragraph 94 states:

“It is important that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a pro-active, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education.”

6 EVALUATION

- 6.1 The main issues to be considered in this application are the principle of the development, the impact of the development on the landscape qualities of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, effect of the development on the amenities of the neighbouring residents, highway safety and access.

Principle of the Development

- 6.2 The applicant and her husband run an established rural business raising Christmas trees for sale. They wish to diversify their business by using their land for a forest pre-school nursery. A forest school is a land-based learning setting rather than a classroom-based setting. This

requires outdoor space. The ethos of a forest school is that the children spend all of their time learning outside. The forest school the first of its type in the Ribble Valley and offers a very different learning experience. This broadens choice in education and choice of pre-school places in the area meeting.

- 6.3 The Core Strategy has no specific relevant policies on the provision of new school or educational facilities. However, there are policies in the NPPF which support the proposal. Firstly, paragraph 83 supports the sustainable growth of all types of business in rural areas including through the conversion of existing buildings. The proposal represents the diversification of an existing agricultural /land-based rural business. Whilst we have stated that predominately the school is run outdoors, some indoor space is required to support the use such as toilets and kitchen which are within an existing building on the site.
- 6.4 Secondly, the NPPF at paragraph 84 recognises that to meet community needs in rural areas sites may need to be found beyond existing settlements. A pre-school facility meets local communities needs for pre-school education.
- 6.5 Thirdly, the NPPF at paragraph 94 places emphasis on the need to provide a choice of school places and widen the choice in education. The forest school ethos provides a markedly different learning setting to more traditional pre-school nurseries and will undoubtedly widen the choice in education facilities in the area as well as widening the choice of places available. The open-air setting of the school is proving attractive to parents at this time who are concerned about the spread of the Covid 19 virus.
- 6.6 Whilst the Core Strategy has no specific policies on schools and education provision it does support the growth of business and the local economy policy DMB1. The nursery school will provide employment for four people. Key Statement EC1 supports the farm diversification, the strengthening of the wider rural economy. The development provides a pre-school facility to satisfy the local need for pre-school education which is a benefit to the community this in turn supports the social well-being of the area. This meets the requirement of Policy DMG2 which supports development outside settlement boundaries in these circumstances. In principle the policies of the NPPF and the Core Strategy support the proposal.

Impact on the landscape qualities of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- 6.7 The proposed development requires no new permanent buildings. The ancillary facilities such as toilet and kitchen are provided within the existing accommodation on the site. The site already has an area for car parking and turning. The site being a Christmas tree nursery is well-screened by trees. Small structures have been erected around the site such as

climbing/play equipment and small shelters. These are well-screened and not visible from outside of the site. The use of the building and land as a forest pre-school will have an insignificant impact on the landscape.

Neighbouring Amenities

- 6.8 The areas of the site used for learning where the children will spend the majority of their time are well away from residential properties. The nearest point is approximately 46m away from the boundary of the nearest dwelling. The intervening land is heavily covered in trees. There is a sufficient distance between the school activities and the neighbouring properties for the amenities of the neighbouring residents to be unaffected by the proposed use.

Highway safety and access

- 6.9 Eaves Hall Lane is an adopted highway. It provides access to Eaves Hall Hotel and wedding venue and to the Three Rivers Caravan Park as well as a number of dwellings. The increase in the use of Eaves Hall Lane by parents and staff travelling to the site will be insignificant compared to the existing use of the lane.
- 6.10 The forest school will only operate between 9am and 3pm with the earliest and latest arrival and departure times for parents being 8.45am and 3.15pm. Sunrise on the 21 December is about 8.25 and sunset on the 21 December is about 3.50pm. All activities will be carried out during day light hours and so no artificial lighting is required. Whilst Eaves Hall Lane is an unlit rural road people accessing the forest school will be doing so in daylight hours.
- 6.11 It is feasible that access to the forest school could be gained on foot from the nearby housing and villages. However, the nature of the road is such that most parents will access this or any other pre-school facilities by car. The local primary school West Bradford and Waddington (with pre-school nursery) is positioned mid-way between the two villages. On foot the primary school is 1.2km from the centre of West Bradford and the proposed forest school is 1.9km. Bus service 67 Clitheroe-Nelson via Waddington, West Bradford, Grindleton, Downham runs along the road between Waddington and West Bradford.
- 6.12 Whilst Policy DMG3 attaches weight to being able to access development by public transport this is not always possible in every rural location. The NPPF paragraphs 103 acknowledges that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making. Parents in the local area have the choice of the pre-school at Waddington and West Bradford primary school or the proposed forest school at Dove Skye Nursery. The next nearest pre-

school facilities are at Grindleton primary school or in Clitheroe. The provision of pre-school education at Dove Syke will broaden choice and reduce travel times for local parents.

- 6.13 The sale of Christmas trees is seasonal. The majority of customers call at weekends and seasonal staff are employed at weekends. As the parents drop off children at the forest school and then leave means parking spaces for customers to the Christmas trees business will still be available. The car park has spaces for 25 cars.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The proposed forest school provides education outdoors within the natural environment. To do this successfully it requires access to a large area of outdoor space. Forest schools enable children to explore and experience the natural world through hands-on activities. The proposal meets the policies of the Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework. It represents the diversification of an existing rural business. It will provide additional pre-school education places within the local community and it will broaden the choice in education and choice of pre-school places in the area.
- 7.2 The proposed development will have negligible impact on the landscape qualities of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Any equipment used for the outdoors educational activities are well screened by the existing planting and trees on the site. The ancillary accommodation for toilets etc. is within the existing buildings and parking is available on the existing car park.
- 7.3 The level of activity associated with the proposed forest school will be low given the low number of children and staff attending. This is unlikely to result in any loss of amenity to neighbouring properties as there is sufficient distance between the outdoors education areas and the neighbours' dwellings. The level of traffic attracted to the site as a result of the forest school is low.
- 7.4 The use of the Eaves Hall Lane for access to the site is unlikely to lead to a significant increase in traffic given the other residential properties and businesses which use this lane. The forest school operates during day-light hours which means the lack of street -lighting is not an issue.