

Development and Conservation
North Hertfordshire District Council
PO Box 10613
Nottingham
NG3 6DW

4th December 2025

Our Ref: 25/8423

Dear Sir/Madam,

Full Planning Permission for the external alterations to the existing Busy Bees Nursery to provide additional garden space at Busy Bees at Icknield Way, Letchworth, Hertfordshire, SG6 4GY.

On behalf of Busy Bees ('the applicant'), please find enclosed a full planning application which seeks to extend the outdoor garden space, accommodated through the removal of some on-site car parking at the existing Busy Bees at Icknield Way, Letchworth.

Application Site

The nursery is located along Icknield Way, just outside of the town centre boundary of Letchworth Garden City. The existing nursery operates at a capacity of 104 children and is serviced by 61 parking spaces for staff and parent/guardians. The site is surrounded by residential and community use, with the railway line running to the south of the site. The eastern boundary of the site is shared with the Letchworth Conservation Area, however the site remains outside of this area.

With easy access to Icknield Way, the site is well located for staff and attending children. Letchworth Garden City benefits from the Garden City Greenway, a circular route around the town appropriate for walking and cycling. The site is also located approximate 800 metres from public transport services at Letchworth Garden City National Rail station. Busy Bees has successfully operated at this site in line with the previous permissions and now seek to extend the outdoor play areas for the children.

Proposal & Background

The proposed development seeks to provide external alterations to the existing Busy Bees Nursery to provide additional garden space at the site. The extension will be accommodated through the removal of some on-site car parking, with provision decreasing from 60 to 51 spaces post-development

The garden will be extended from the existing nursery garden to encompass the north east corner of the site. This will extend the garden space by 206.9sq.m.

The proposed works include the removal of the existing 6ft rear garden fence (approx. 13m) and installation of a replacement picket fence, together with new 6ft featheredge fencing across approximately 50m², including new double gates. The newly fitted featheredge fencing and gates will be repositioned to create a dedicated bin store accessible from the car park. Further improvements include the installation of a sail shade with four posts and pads, and the extension of the garden into a portion

of the car park. This will incorporate a ramped transition to the existing kerb edge using compacted MOT Type 1 to achieve a suitable gradient, with drilled tarmac to support drainage (noting that drainage performance cannot be warranted due to underlying ground conditions). The extended area will be finished with a shock pad layer and artificial grass, enhancing the quality and usability of the outdoor play environment.



Planning Policy

Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (The Act) requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the statutory development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The relevant Local Plan guiding development is the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031, which was adopted on Tuesday 8 November 2022. Alongside the Local Plan, SPDs such as the Design SPD (adopted July 2011) are relevant. Relevant policies are listed below:

- *Policy SP13 Historic environment* – the Council will maintain a strong presumption in favour of the retention, preservation and enhancement of heritage assets and their setting according to their significance.
- *Policy T1 Assessment of transport matters* – planning permission will be granted provided that: a) Development would not lead to highway safety problems or cause unacceptable impacts upon the highway network, c) Suitable Transport Statements, Transport Assessments and / or Travel Plans along with supporting documents are provided where required.
- *Policy T2 Parking* – parking for non-residential development is provided having regard to the standards for non-residential development set out in the relevant Supplementary Planning Document.
- *Policy D1 Sustainable design* – Planning permission will be granted provided that development proposals: a) Respond positively to the site's local context; b) Take all reasonable opportunities, consistent with the nature and scale of the scheme.
- *Policy HE1 Designated heritage assets* – planning applications relating to Designated heritage Assets or their setting shall be accompanied by a Heritage Assessment/Justification Statement.

In addition, the policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), most recently updated in December 2024, are material considerations in the determination of planning applications. The content of the NPPF (December 2024) is a material consideration. The chapters particularly pertinent to the determination of the application include:

Decision-making

Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise (paragraph 48). Decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible, and within statutory timescales unless a longer period has been agreed by the applicant in writing.

Promoting healthy and safe communities

Paragraph 100 sets out that 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. It states that local authorities should 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.

Making effective use of land

Paragraph 124 states that planning policies and decision should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions.

Achieving well-designed places

Paragraph 131 sets out that the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creating better places in which to live and work and helps make development more acceptable to communities.

Planning Assessment

In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, this application has been assessed against the relevant policies of the Development Plan and other material considerations, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024).

Principle of Development

Busy Bees has operated successfully at this site for several years, providing an established early years education facility that serves the local community. The proposed development seeks to improve the quality of outdoor play space for children through the modest extension of the existing garden area. Paragraph 100 of the NPPF sets out that great weight should be given to the need to create, expand, or alter early years and educational facilities to meet the needs of existing and new communities. The principle of enhancing the nursery's external environment, which directly supports children's health, wellbeing and learning outcomes, is therefore strongly supported by national policy.

Design and Layout

The proposed external alterations are modest in scale and respond positively to the site's local context in accordance with Policy D1 (Sustainable Design) of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011–2031. The scheme makes effective use of available land within the existing site boundary and ensures that the new garden space integrates seamlessly with the existing nursery setting. The proposals safeguard the amenity of neighbouring properties and maintain the character of the surrounding area, consistent with the principles set out in Paragraph 131 of the NPPF relating to achieving well-designed, sustainable places.

Heritage

The eastern boundary of the site adjoins the Letchworth Conservation Area, although the site itself lies outside of it. In accordance with Policy SP13 (Historic Environment) and Policy HE1 (Designated Heritage Assets) of the Local Plan, careful consideration has been given to the potential impact of the proposal on the setting of the Conservation Area. The development

comprises minor external alterations within the existing site envelope and will not harm any heritage assets or their setting. The proposal therefore accords with the aims of the Local Plan and the guidance set out in Chapter 16 of the NPPF (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment).

Transport and Accessibility

This application is supported by a Transport Technical Note produced by RGP, which confirms that the site benefits from excellent accessibility by active and sustainable travel modes. The report identifies that staff and parents/guardians have opportunities to travel to the nursery on foot or by bicycle, with convenient access to local walking and cycling routes, including the Garden City Greenway. For those who live further afield, the site is well served by local bus routes and is located approximately 800 metres from Letchworth Garden City National Rail Station, providing sustainable travel options for part or all of the journey.

The Technical Note additionally identifies that the nursery has a maximum operational capacity of 193 children and up to 70 staff, and that a 2000m walk catchment and 5000m cycle catchment cover the wider Letchworth area, Baldock, and parts of Hitchin, demonstrating extensive opportunities for non-car travel.

The Technical Note also confirms, based on TRICS data and on-site observations, that the existing car park does not operate at or near full capacity during typical day-to-day operations, typically operates at around 50% occupancy during peak periods. Accordingly, the proposed reduction in on-site parking provision from 60 to 51 spaces is considered appropriate and consistent with Policy T1 (Assessment of Transport Matters) and Policy T2 (Parking) of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan.

Sustainability and Biodiversity Considerations

In accordance with Policy D1 (Sustainable Design), the proposal takes all reasonable opportunities to enhance the quality of the site for its users. The extension of the outdoor garden area will increase the proportion of soft landscaping and natural play space within the site, contributing positively to biodiversity and sustainable land use.

Supporting documents, including the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Statement by BWB and Arboricultural Impact Assessment by TEP, confirm that the proposal will not result in the loss of significant vegetation or trees and that appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures are incorporated into the scheme.

The BNG Statement confirms that no natural habitats are present within the red line boundary and that the development qualifies for the statutory 'de minimis' exemption, meaning no mandatory 10% net gain is required. The Arboricultural Impact Assessment identifies eight individual trees, one group and two hedgerows within influence of the site, all of which are retained without removal. Only minor deadwood removal from one tree (T8) is recommended for safety reasons, and existing hard surfacing provides adequate root protection during construction. Both assessments confirm that the development will not result in significant environmental or arboricultural impacts.

Summary & Application Package

Overall, the proposed development represents a modest and well-considered enhancement to an established nursery facility. It supports the continued provision of high-quality early years education, promotes healthy and active play, and aligns with the sustainable development objectives of both the North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2011–2031) and the NPPF (December 2024). The proposal accords with the relevant development plan policies, and there are no material considerations which indicate that planning permission should not be granted.

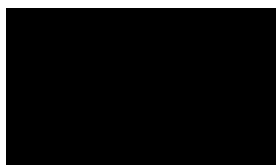
In addition to this cover letter, the following documents are submitted in support of the application:

- Application forms and certificates, by Planning Potential Ltd

- Plans Pack, by LAP Architects
 - Site Location Plan
 - Existing Site Plan
 - Proposed Site Plan (including elevations of bin store and fencing)
- Transport Technical Note by RGP
- BNG Statement by BWB
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment by TEP

We trust that the application can be now validated and await confirmation of this. Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Ellie Howard

Assistant Planner

Planning Potential

Newcastle/Harrogate

Enc.