

Design and Access Statement

1. Introduction & Executive Summary

- **The Proposal:** Permanent change of use of an agricultural/equestrian smallholding to an outdoor-focused forest nursery (Use Class E(f) for a maximum of 20 children, operating Monday to Friday).
- **Core Strategy:** The project completely reuses a redundant, existing stable block for indoor welfare, administrative, and teaching space, avoiding any new structural building footprints in the countryside.

2. The Design Component: Use, Layout, and Landscaping

- **Stable Block Conversion:** Sympathetic internal conversion of the existing timber stable block to provide an insulated, weather-secure base. The building already benefits from live connections to **mains water, mains electricity, and mains drainage**, ensuring full statutory health and hygiene compliance from day one.
- **Outdoor Play Equipment & Integration:** Outdoor play will utilize low-impact, child-centred equipment including **wooden mud kitchens and ground-level or safely secured trampolines**. These structures are domestic/educational in scale, chosen to harmonize with the rural backdrop. They do not involve extensive foundations or visual intrusion into the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- **The 100-Metre Noise Safeguard:** The nearest residential garden boundary is **100 metres away**. This massive geographic separation ensures that any noise generated from outdoor play or the trampolines will naturally dissipate into the surrounding rural topography long before reaching any neighbours.

3. The Access Component: Parking, Highways, and Private Road Flow

- **Access Point:** Vehicular access to the smallholding is achieved via **Lodgelands**.
 - **The Private Road Advantage:** Because Lodgelands is a quiet, mixed-use private road rather than a heavily trafficked public highway, any vehicle movements associated with child drop-off will not disrupt major local thoroughfares or town traffic.
 - **Direct Stable Drop-Off:** Parents can safely drive past the main entrance track **directly up to the stable block area**. This completely eliminates any risk of parents parking on the roadside or blocking public paths.
 - **Utilization of Pre-Existing Hardstanding:** Vehicles will park and turn on the **existing chalk hardstanding yard** located directly in front of the stable block. Because this infrastructure is already in place, **no new concrete, tarmac, or non-porous surfaces are required**, preserving the local drainage profile.
 - **Forward-Gear Exit Safety:** The chalk hardstanding area provides sufficient space for a turning circle. This guarantees that staff and parents can easily maneuver their cars and **always enter and exit Lodgelands in a forward gear**.
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Final Actionable Steps Before Submitting to Mid Sussex Council

1. **Verify the Right of Way:** Since Lodgelands is a private road, ensure your property deeds confirm you have full, unrestricted vehicular rights of way for commercial/business purposes, not just agricultural use.
2. **Draft a Traffic Management Plan (TMP):** Planners will likely request this as a condition. You should proactively attach a one-page TMP to your application stating that drop-offs will be staggered (e.g., 10 children between 8:00–8:15 AM and 10 children between 8:15–8:30 AM) to prove that the chalk yard will never be overwhelmed with cars.
3. **Map the Equipment:** Ensure that the exact planned location of the mud kitchens and trampolines is clearly marked on your submitted **Block Plan / Site Layout Drawing** so it mirrors what you have written in this DAS

Economic & Community Benefit Section Template

Copy and adapt this text directly for your Design and Access Statement (DAS):

4. Economic and Community Benefits

4.1 Meeting Local Childcare Deficits & Supporting Working Parents

•**Local Demand Pressure:** The expansion of statutory Early Years Funded Entitlement (EYFE) in West Sussex has created an acute demand for local early-years childcare. Many local provisions are operating at full capacity with extensive waiting lists.

•**Preventing Childcare Deserts:** Rural locations like Ardingly are highly vulnerable to forming "childcare deserts" due to a lack of dedicated, flexible day-nursery facilities. By introducing a new 20-place nursery, this proposal directly increases rural childcare capacity, enabling parents in Ardingly and Haywards Heath to return to or remain in employment.

4.2 Sustainable Rural Diversification & Job Creation

•**Securing Farm Viability:** In accordance with national and local planning policies aimed at supporting the rural economy, this proposal represents an exemplary form of farm diversification. It introduces a reliable, alternative, and non-agricultural revenue stream that helps secure the long-term financial viability of the smallholding.

•**Direct Employment:** The nursery will generate new, long-term employment opportunities within Ardingly. It will require 3 to 5 qualified early-years practitioners, in addition to supporting local supply chains, such as local food producers, maintenance workers, and equipment suppliers.

4.3 Unique Health, Wellbeing & Educational Provision

•**Nature-Based Learning:** The unique "forest nursery" model provides an invaluable outdoor educational asset to the community. Extensive UK educational research proves that forest school settings significantly enhance early cognitive development, self-regulation, and gross motor skills compared to traditional indoor classrooms.

•**Mental Health & Inclusivity:** The sensory environment of a woodland-based nursery acts as a natural regulator for children, particularly benefiting early-years pupils showing signs of anxiety or special educational needs (SEND). This adds a highly specialized, diverse educational option to the Mid Sussex region that is currently underrepresented.

4.4 Low-Impact, Green Infrastructure

•**Zero Construction Burden:** Unlike standard urban nursery developments, this proposal delivers major social benefits with a net-zero building footprint. It achieves this by repurposing a redundant timber stable block and utilising live utility infrastructure, delivering vital community benefits without placing a burden on local green space or resources.