



Icon Building Consultancy Ltd

13 Ducketts Wharf

South Street

Bishops Stortford

Hertfordshire

CM23 3AR

Friday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2023

Dear Stuart,

**The Barn House, Meadow Way, Eastcote, HA4 8TP**

Further to our site meeting at Eastcote on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> March, I have been provided with a copy of:-

- The Design and Access Statement
- The Proposed Plans for the nursery
- A copy of Geoff Nobles Heritage Statement

My role in the project has been to assist my clients Blossom Tree Montessori Ltd with the layout and design of the nursery, working with their operations team to make sure the property will work for them operationally as a functioning nursery, and will meet the needs of the team of staff and parents and children using the building in the future.

By way of background I am a Chartered Surveyor with 23 years post qualification experience, and am a specialist in the childrens day nursey sector. I advise childrens day nursery groups on property strategy, property acquisition and nursery design and fit out. I have 10 years experience in the childrens day nursery sector.

### **Suitability of the Property**

The property will make a fabulous nursery, it is located in the heart of the community, and within walking distance of the high street and a large catchment of children. The location is ideal for a new nursery setting, with close proximity to public transport and already offering a large car park, which does not need amending as part of the proposals.

There is an existing large garden, which offers great opportunities for the children to play outside and get some fresh air.

The site is self contained, which makes it much easier to keep the environment secure and meet the safeguarding responsibilities for the nursery. The building is beautiful and it will be wonderful for it to be opened up to the wider community for use.

The space is largely open plan and has good natural light which will make for a pleasant learning environment for the children. There are already 2 staircases for fire evacuation. There are some smaller rooms already on the ground floor which can be utilised for the kitchen and staff rooms. The building really needs minimal changes to make it suitable for a nursery.

The building itself is a vacant office property. Post covid, with the rise of working flexibly from home there has been an increase in such properties becoming vacant and sold for alternative uses. In order to bring buildings like this back into useful occupation you have to maximise their potential and inevitably changes do need to be made to make the property suitable for a new use. The demand for office buildings has fallen as a result of the reduced number of desks companies typically require in the current climate. Government policy allows for the reuse of office buildings such as this for nursery use without requiring planning consent, and as such many nursery operators are purchasing buildings such as this giving them a new lease of life.

### **Proposed Plans**

The plans for the property include only minor changes to the layout, having regard to the listed nature of the property.

On the ground floor the largest existing cellular office is used for the kitchen. A full commercial kitchen is required to cater for the childrens nutritional requirements. Many of the children at the nursery will attend all day 5 days per week, so it is essential that fresh food can be prepared on site every day. The kitchen needs to meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework ('EYFS') and the local authorities environmental health team. The room allocated is a good size and the layout is optimal to meet these requirements.

The other existing cellular office on the ground floor is utilised as the staff room. A comfortable break room is required by employment law. The property is optimally located for the high street to allow staff to walk to the shops on foot as well in their lunch break.

The toilets by the front door are removed and turned into an office and parent meeting room, this is required by the EYFS for confidential parent discussions. The office will be lockable to keep confidential information regarding the children as required by the data protection regulations. The remaining toilets are refurbished for staff and guests.

A third cellular office at the front of the building is converted to childrens toilets. The addition of toilets is a requirement of the EYFS with a ratio of one toilet per 10 children recommended. Suitable hand washing facilities with children and adult height sinks are added.

The main open plan office area on the ground floor remains largely unaltered, however a small partition wall is required to segregate off an area of the baby room to form a nappy change area. This needs to be partitioned from the main room to preserve the privacy and dignity of the children whilst changing. Again hand washing facilities are included in the nappy change area and also in the main nursery room. Handwashing is a vital part of maintaining cleanliness and preventing the spread of illness in a nursery setting.

The layout on the first floor is also largely unchanged, the rooms as they are lend themselves to classrooms. The only additions to each room is toilets and handwashing facilities. With young children who are transitioning from nappys to toilet training it is not realistic to expect them to walk down the stairs to toilets on the ground floor when they need to go to the toilet. This is too far, toilets in each classroom are essential to the operation of the nursery.

## **Summary**

The plans you and my clients have prepared in my opinion create a tasteful and well thought out layout which allows the property to be brought back into useful occupation with minimal alterations and additions. It is suitable for modern childcare requirements with open plan rooms for good oversight and visibility as required by the EYFS and meets all current legislation.

By making this a viable project this effectively allows the reuse of a redundant building and prevents it falling into disrepair. The property itself will make a stunning nursery and it is great for the community that the building will be more open to them than it was previously as private offices.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'K Smith'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter 'K' being large and stylized.

**Karen Smith BSc (Hons) MRICS**

**Director, The D1 Property Agency Ltd**

**[karen@d1properties.co.uk](mailto:karen@d1properties.co.uk)**