

CHILDCARE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

for

London Lodge

Prepared by

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Client Background

Little Forest Schools is a family run business operating two Forest School Nursery settings in the Surrey area for children aged 2 to 5 years old.

Introduction

There is a wealth of research to show that well planned early learning experiences provide strong foundations for later learning during the school years. Managing a childcare resource has been a passionate ambition of mine for many years having worked as a Nursery Nurse as a school leaver and then developing my professional role with children as a Senior Child Protection Social Worker within Surrey Children & Families. I have worked with families of all cultures and ethnic backgrounds to promote the health, education and wellbeing of children and young people. I have extensive knowledge of childcare practice and my role has further developed over the years completing a Postgraduate National Childcare Award. After having my own daughter in 2005, I found I had a greater need to move away from my Social Work career. In May 2006 my husband and I became the owners of Little Forest School on the Green. In June 2013 we acquired a fifteen-year lease to renovate Nursery Lodge in Nonsuch Park Cheam which opened as Little Oaks Forest School in October 2013.

Details about our current service

Little Forest School on the Green is an established, successfully run Forest School for children between the ages of 2 years to 5 years from 9am to 3pm term time only. The school is situated in the quiet village of Walton on the Hill and serves the local community and surrounding areas of Tadworth and Kingswood. It has a solid reputation achieving its second Outstanding Ofsted inspection in January 2020. Little Forest School on the Green welcomes 25 children each day and promotes a healthy natural lifestyle for its children giving them the opportunity to enjoy fun and play in 20 acres of private woodland belonging to the Sandy Hill Trust. The school enjoys a great partnership with the Trustees and our children are taught to respect the natural woodland and its inhabitants by helping to care for the environment and adhering to the Woodland Trusts Ecological outcomes, for example using different paths to access the site so as not to overly disturb plant growth in one area. Since opening in 2008 our families have raised funds to donate bird boxes, protect badger sets, help with the cost of coppicing and are involved in the upkeep and planting of flowers and shrubs in the more structured open areas of the woodland around the pond.

Little Oaks Forest School; Nursey Lodge: Our Forest School opened in October 2013. Nursery Lodge sits in a Grade II listed building in Nonsuch Park surrounded by historic woodland. For this provision we undertook extensive renovation work to the building before opening as a Forest school setting. My husband Lee Clift worked closely with Brendan Smith Head of Legal and Estates and Anthony Evans Head of Planning and Conservation at Epsom and Ewell Council to restore Nursery Lodge to its former glory and we continue to maintain the building of which we are the proud custodians.

Little Oaks Forest School cares for children between the ages of 2 years to 5 years from 8am to 4.30pm 50 weeks of the year and serves the local community and surrounding areas of Cheam, Sutton Stoneleigh and Worcester Park. Our Forest School has a great reputation as an alternative childcare provision in the area. www.nonsuchparkforestschool.com

Forest School Aims

Little Oaks Forest School is designed to enhance and complement our day to day curriculum in the Foundation Stage. It offers all our children opportunities to develop confidence and self-esteem, and to experience achievement in the woodland grounds of Nonsuch Park by kind permission of Surrey County Council. Our core objectives are to produce confident and capable children like these.

'We feel happy and contented and care for each other. Our practical skills are getting better. We understand, care for, and appreciate the natural environment. We know when it is safe to take risks. We can make choices and think deeply. We have good ideas and love finding out new things. Our language skills are improving all the time. We do lots of outdoor physical activity. We are independent and resourceful'.

The teachers at Little Oaks Forest School believe that young children develop most when they are 'learning by doing', when they are given responsibility, work in groups, take acceptable risks with guidance and think for themselves.

The Forest School philosophy is to equip young children with an education that encourages an appreciation of the natural world, through regular visits to local woodland areas where hands on learning experiences can take place. The Forest School idea grew from staff's desire to provide a curriculum at Little Oaks Forest School which reflected the naturally stunning area in which the Nursery School is situated. Young children are shown how to look after the natural environment, leave things as they find them, protect plants and animals, take litter home and consider dog walkers and other park users. We are currently working with the council to provide recycling bins to reinforce our message of 'reduce, reuse, recycle' Our families are encouraged to lead active healthy lifestyles by walking or cycling to school.

Proposed Use of London Lodge House

The proposed use for London Lodge is a D1 Forest Nursery School for children aged **3 months** to 5 years old. We are regularly approached by parents looking for childcare who wish to return to work who need longer daycare hours and facilities for very young infants, our current space at Nursery Lodge does not allow for this. London Lodge House would be our sister site that would welcome young infants from the age of 3 months old up to preschool age. London Lodge House would accommodate between 25 to 35 children supported by 12 members of staff.

London Lodge House will receive a full refurbishment from its current run-down condition, the outlining of which would be subject to planning with the guidance of building control. We would create an open plan space both upstairs and downstairs to provide free flow movement for the children. The house would be more energy efficient with new insulation, new cladding, new double-glazed windows and new external doors. We wish to explore renewable energy products such as solar panels and install more energy efficient products for lighting, heating and water services. To meet the needs of the children new toilet facilities will be required.

Garden Area/ Natural Habitat

There is an abundance of biodiversity in the area. It is very important for us to enhance and cherish nature in line with our Forest School ethos and approach. We are aware that squirrels, bats, foxes, badgers and hedgehogs inhabit the park and we do what is best to improve their habitat (we have made small holes in our fence line at Nursery Lodge to allow small animals to move through) and we are always mindful of our friends in the park!

Two recent ecological reports have been undertaken on this site. They identify the site as having an abundance of inhabitants including 'Bats and Slow Worms' so undertaking considerate building works at London Lodge House would help protect and ensure the site is preserved as much as possible.

We would work closely with any approved contractor/agency recommended to us by yourselves to facilitate the welfare and protection of any indigenous/endangered/protected species and would be guided by them. Directional low-level lighting for the bats and removing slow worms to a different area for protection during ongoing renovation works are two of the guidelines we would follow. We are also aware that the '**Bird Nesting Season**' is officially from February until August and it is recommended that vegetation works (tree or hedge cutting) or site clearance should be done outside of the nesting season. Any work to the garden area would need to commence after this time. We would take guidance from approved professionals with regards to what is appropriate or inappropriate to remove. It is very important to the ethos of Forest School that trees and wooded areas are kept intact. We are

aware that there are also several tree preservation orders within the site and it would not be necessary for us to remove the trees ensuring the boroughs very rich and valued tree scape. Any fencing would need to be increased in height to comply with the safeguarding of children. As a forest school, children will be outside for most of the day and their privacy will need to be protected. An additional outdoor wooden classroom (see below) separate from the main building would be required to allow free movement around the whole site which is essential for teaching. Along with wooden outdoor storage facilities. A compost area, vegetable garden, cycle rack and walking bus between the two lodges will encourage children and families to think 'Green' and walk or cycle to school.



Nursery Lodge Outdoor Classroom with Office



Nursery Lodge Open Outdoor Classroom

Identification of the need for a new provision at London Lodge House

The website Day Nurseries.co.uk is an online resource that shows daycare facilities in Epsom and Ewell. It currently shows Six-day nurseries in the Nonsuch Ward which include Little Oaks Forest School. The childcare provision on the Ewell/Stoneleigh Ward is minimal which identifies a need for a provision in this area. Many of our families from the Stoneleigh Ward would be able to access the new facility at London Lodge.

Recent 'Childcare Sufficiency Assessments' in 2011 and 2016 identify population growths for 0-4 years old's in the County which will rise for ten years along with population growth increasing with new housing projects in and around Epsom. It identifies that in the area where London Lodge sits, is one of low penetration high occupation, suggesting that this could potentially be a good area to establish a new provision for nursery age children. The Sufficiency assessment indicates there is a high occupancy rate for childcare places in the area, based on the knowledge obtained from already operating a Nursery School in the local area, we are aware of a growing demand for childcare places for Forest School provision.

Hours of Operation

The Forest School would operate Monday-Friday 7.30-6.30pm 50 weeks of the year.

Car Parking

The entrance on London Road can be particularly busy, further discussions and consultations would need to take place with regards to parking and safety. Further discussions as to the proposed entrance to the site would be helpful given the current entrance is directly on the main slip road into the park and the danger/problems this may cause to children and parents congregating outside from moving cars.

Rental Offer

For this project we would propose a figure of **twenty-eight** thousand pounds per annum and envisage a fifteen-year lease. We would expect for the first year of trading

- A rent-free period of **six months** for time to complete works
- Followed by **twelve months** rent at 50% to establish the business
- A further **twelve months** rent of 75% to reflect our initial renovation costs
- Full rent to be paid at **thirty months**
- Rent reviews to take place every five years.

Conditions/Other Requirements We would like it to be kindly noted that we are an existing tenant of Nonsuch Park having invested more than £80'000 in renovation costs to Nursery Lodge. We continue to refurbish and modernize this wonderful historic building of which we are the proud custodians. We are a small privately-owned business that must keep moving forward in terms of what we can offer parents to compete alongside our nearby larger corporate competitors. Recent studies show that Forest School has now become one of the most popular early years experiences and we would like to continue and expand on this by offering extended opening hours and places for young infants and siblings of children who attend Nursery Lodge. We can achieve this by offering a forest school experience at London Lodge House.

Conclusion

We believe that we can put this amazing site to great use whilst keeping in line with the council's vision for the area and bring life back to London Lodge House and the lower side of the park. We will work in partnership with Epsom and Ewell Council and the agencies recommended to us by yourselves and totally respect the conservation area it is surrounded by.

Solicitors Details: Copley Clarke Solicitors
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I appreciate the time you have taken to look through our proposal and look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Angela & Lee Clift