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Wiltshire Council

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September 2026*

**Ref. Design & Access Statement – Little Acorns Nursery Air-Source Heat-Pump / A/C
Installation, Smiths Barn, West Street, Aldbourne, Marlborough, SN8 2BS**

INTRODUCTION

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for the installation of five reversible air-source heat-pump systems at Little Acorns Nursery, Smiths Barn, West Street, Aldbourne.

The systems will provide controllable heating and cooling to existing and recently approved nursery accommodation, improving thermal comfort throughout the year and helping to address both winter heating requirements and periods of summer overheating. The proposal comprises five external condenser units and associated internal units, together with refrigerant pipework, electrical connections, condensate drainage, service penetrations, brackets and associated making good.

The application does not propose any change of use, extension or additional floorspace. The nursery use is established and the proposed equipment represents environmental infrastructure supporting the continued operation of the nursery.

SITE AND CONTEXT

Little Acorns is an established children's day nursery occupying Smiths Barn on West Street, Aldbourne.

Planning records associated with the recent application for additional nursery accommodation identify Smiths Barn as a building constructed in 2002 on the site of a former agricultural barn.

The site lies within the Aldbourne Conservation Area. The wider village contains a range of historic buildings and structures which collectively contribute to its distinctive rural character and historic significance.

The proposal has therefore been developed with particular regard to the appearance of the equipment, its relationship with the existing building and the need to preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

The building has an established history of nursery and commercial use.
The most recent relevant permission is:

PL/2026/04615 – Change of use of part of the first floor of the building from office/storage (Use Class B1/B8) to daycare nursery (Use Class E), West Office, Smiths Barn, West Street, Aldbourne. Approved with conditions 15 September 2026.

The supporting information for that application records that Smiths Barn was constructed in 2002 under permission K/043406 and that the relevant first-floor area formed part of the original nursery accommodation before subsequently being used for staff accommodation and later office use.

Permission PL/2026/04615 allows part of the first floor to return to nursery use, providing an additional classroom for up to 16 children.

One of the five proposed heat-pump systems will serve this recently approved first-floor classroom. The remaining systems serve existing nursery accommodation.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Five reversible air-source heat-pump systems are proposed, providing both heating and cooling.

The systems will serve the following nursery spaces:

- Seedlings Room 1
- Saplings
- Seedlings Room 2
- Oaks
- Newly approved first-floor classroom

The equipment comprises modern inverter-controlled split systems, with external condenser units connected to internal units by insulated refrigerant pipework and associated electrical and condensate connections.

The precise positions and arrangement of the equipment are shown on the submitted A/C Strategy drawings.

Associated pipework and containment will be neatly routed and coordinated with the existing building. Service penetrations will be kept to the minimum reasonably necessary and carefully made good following installation.

NEED FOR THE DEVELOPMENT

Nursery accommodation presents particular requirements for maintaining comfortable and appropriately controlled internal temperatures because young children spend extended periods within individual rooms, including periods of activity and rest.

The proposed systems provide a single efficient means of delivering both heating and cooling, allowing individual nursery spaces to respond to changing conditions throughout the year.

The proposal will provide reliable controllable heating during colder periods while also improving resilience to increasingly frequent periods of high summer temperatures and overheating.

The fifth system will enable the newly approved first-floor classroom to benefit from the same controllable heating and cooling strategy as the remainder of the nursery.

DESIGN AND CONSERVATION AREA

The site lies within the Aldbourne Conservation Area and the potential visual effect of the proposed equipment has been considered as an integral part of the design.

Smiths Barn is a relatively modern building, constructed in 2002 on the site of a former agricultural barn. The proposed works are correspondingly modest additions to an existing developed nursery site and do not alter the scale, massing, roof form or fundamental architectural composition of the building.

The five external condenser units are grouped at high level on the secondary side elevation of Smiths Barn. Although positioned away from the principal elevation, the installation is capable of being seen obliquely on approach from West Street and has therefore been considered carefully in the context of the Aldbourne Conservation Area.

To minimise the visual prominence of the mechanical equipment, the external condensers will be contained behind a coordinated louvred aluminium enclosure, finished in a subdued powder-coated colour selected to complement the existing weatherboarding and external materials of Smiths Barn. The enclosure will provide a simple and visually coherent treatment to the installation rather than leaving individual items of mechanical plant exposed.

The enclosure will be designed to maintain the ventilation, discharge and maintenance clearances required by the equipment manufacturer. Associated refrigerant pipework, electrical containment and condensate drainage will be grouped and routed discreetly, with penetrations kept to the minimum reasonably necessary and carefully made good.

The resulting installation will read as a controlled and subordinate addition to this modern barn-form building. The works do not alter its overall scale, massing or roof form and are substantially reversible. Having regard to the design and location of the installation, the proposal is considered to preserve the character and appearance of the Aldbourne Conservation Area.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CONSIDERATIONS

The proposed equipment comprises reversible air-source heat-pump technology rather than cooling-only equipment. It will therefore provide efficient electric heating as well as cooling.

This is consistent with the direction of national planning policy towards improving the energy performance and climate resilience of existing buildings. The August 2026 National Planning Policy Framework gives substantial weight to the benefits of improving existing buildings through renewable and low-carbon energy technologies, including heat pumps where planning permission is required, and to measures which improve resilience to anticipated climate change.

The proposal will improve the nursery's ability to maintain appropriate internal conditions during both cold weather and periods of elevated summer temperatures.

NOISE AND RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

The five external condensers comprise modern inverter-controlled equipment which modulates its output in response to heating and cooling demand. Manufacturer's technical information, including published acoustic performance data for the proposed equipment, accompanies the application.

The condenser bank will additionally be contained within a purpose-designed louvred enclosure. In addition to reducing the visual prominence of the installation, the enclosure will provide a degree of acoustic screening. The equipment will be installed on appropriate anti-vibration mountings to minimise structure-borne vibration.

The enclosure will be designed in coordination with the mechanical installation to ensure that acoustic screening does not compromise the airflow, discharge or maintenance requirements of the heat-pump equipment.

Having regard to the modern inverter-controlled equipment, its grouped location, anti-vibration installation and proposed screening, the development is considered capable of operating without unacceptable effects upon neighbouring amenity.

Should the Local Planning Authority or Environmental Health Officer nevertheless identify a specific acoustic concern during determination, the applicant welcomes early dialogue so that any additional information or proportionate mitigation considered necessary can be discussed before determination of the application.

ACCESS

The proposal does not alter pedestrian or vehicular access to the nursery. There will be no change to the existing entrances, circulation arrangements, parking provision or arrangements for children, parents, staff or visitors as a consequence of the proposed heat-pump installation.

CONCLUSION

The proposal provides five modern reversible air-source heat-pump systems to improve heating, cooling and year-round thermal comfort within Little Acorns Nursery.

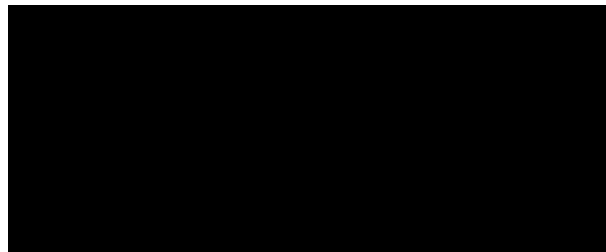
Four systems will serve the established nursery accommodation and a fifth will serve the recently approved first-floor classroom under planning permission PL/2026/04615. The proposal does not create additional floorspace or constitute an intensification of the nursery use. The external works are limited in scale, substantially reversible and have been designed to sit discreetly against the existing modern building.

Particular consideration has been given to the site's location within the Aldbourne Conservation Area, including the positioning of external equipment and the careful routing and making good of associated services.

The development will support the continued sustainable operation of an established community nursery, improve the environmental performance and climate resilience of its accommodation and preserve the character and appearance of the Aldbourne Conservation Area.

Should any detailed concern arise regarding the acoustic or visual effects of the proposed mechanical plant, the applicant welcomes dialogue with the Local Planning Authority during determination so that any necessary and proportionate mitigation can be agreed without delay.

Yours sincerely,



Jim Mitchell. Director