



# TRAFFORD

METROPOLITAN BOROUGH

## PLANNING GUIDELINES - DAY NURSERIES AND PLAYGROUPS

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### INTRODUCTION

There are broadly 3 types of premises where pre-school age children are received to be looked after during the day

- childminding for small numbers of children, usually no more than 3 or 4 but may be more with an approved helper
- playgroups providing group care for children on a sessional basis i.e. mornings or afternoons or both but where no children remain on the premises over the midday period and meals are not provided or taken on the premises
- day nurseries which make all-day care available and some or all of the children have a midday meal on the premises

A sub-category of day nurseries are those associated with a particular workplace. They may be at the workplace or quite separate.

A further activity which can occur (perhaps associated with one of the above) is of older children being collected from school in the afternoon and looked after until collected by their parents.

There are also nursery classes, usually on school premises, provided on a sessional basis, where the primary purpose is educational.

The demand for daytime care of children under 5 has grown significantly in recent years. It is likely to grow even more strongly as employers, anxious to attract more mothers of young children back into paid employment, themselves seek to set up day nurseries.

For a childminder looking after no more than 4 children in their own home, planning permission will not be required. This can be supplemented by looking after other children during term time before and/or after school as long as the total number does not exceed 6.

These numbers are inclusive of the childminder's own children. Playgroups or day nurseries in schools, church halls or community centres where no change of use is involved will not need planning permission. In most other cases planning permission will be required and will always be required for new buildings. This document sets out the Council's planning policies.

## **OTHER REQUIREMENTS**

In addition to any planning permission, all childminders, playgroups and day nurseries must be registered with the Council. Application for registration should be made to the Social Services Department. A booklet "Looking After The Under Fives" is available which explains the requirements. The registration procedure covers the suitability of the premises and staff from the point of view of the welfare of the children. From October 1991 registration requirement will be extended to cover children up to the age of 8 rather than 5 as at present.

## **ISSUES**

These development control guidelines are concerned with the planning issues, in particular the effects on neighbours and the surroundings. The main effects to be considered are:

- Noise and disturbance - from comings and goings, particularly of cars
  - from within the building, especially if it is not detached
  - from outdoor play
- Highway safety and convenience - from additional traffic, manoeuvring and on-street parking
- Appearance - from any alterations to access or parking areas or any new building, or signs.

## **ANALYSIS OF EFFECTS**

Typical day nursery hours of operation are 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday with the main periods of arrivals being 8 - 9.30 a.m. Departures occur from 3.30 p.m. with the main period of activity being 4.45 - 6.00 p.m. Typical playgroup hours are 9 a.m. to 12 noon and 1 - 3.30 p.m. Many playgroups operate mornings only or not every weekday. Day nurseries usually operate all year round whereas school nursery classes (and some playgroups) are open for term times only.

Experience shows that in Trafford around 90% of children in private day nurseries are likely to be brought and collected by car. This means that for a 50 place day nursery including staff there would be around 50 cars arriving and departing within a 1½ hour period in the morning and again in the evening. A playgroup is likely to have a slightly lower percentage of car users but potentially four times a day rather than twice, and concentrated into shorter periods (20 to 30 minutes rather than 1½ hours). Nursery classes at schools have a similar sessional pattern to playgroups. Day nurseries associated with a particular workplace may also have more concentrated arrival and departure periods.

Where older children are collected from school this would normally be done by the organiser's car or mini-bus at around 3.30 p.m. and collection by parents would follow a similar pattern to day nurseries.

The average staff requirement for day nurseries is one to every 5 children, and 50% can be expected to come by car. The staff requirements for playgroups are a little less.

Parents' cars will rarely be parked for less than 2-3 minutes. 5-10 minutes is normal and occasionally it is longer. Where there is a 1½ hour arrival or departure period, the maximum number of cars present at any one time is likely to be about one for every 10 children. Where there is only a 20-30 minute period, the number of parked cars could be three times as many. Staff cars will of course be present throughout the day.

Even where parking is provided on-site, in practice some parents find it more convenient to park on the street.

A day nursery or playgroup generates considerably more activity than a family house. In the case of a converted semi detached, terraced house or flat this may well be noticeable to neighbours through the structure. The extent will depend on the numbers involved, the location of the rooms and the solidity of construction.

Outdoor play is an essential feature of day nurseries and common with playgroups. In fine weather there could be some children outside most of the time. This can be noisy and disturbing to residents in nearby dwellings if they are close and can detract from the enjoyment of nearby gardens if the numbers are large and the area is otherwise quiet. If garden space is restricted the number of children able to be outside at any one time may be limited, but this may expand the period over which outdoor play occurs, and is likely also to mean that play will be close to the boundaries with adjoining properties.

The additional traffic manoeuvring into and out of the site and any likely on-street parking will have to be assessed for their effects on highway safety and convenience. There are more likely to be problems if there is already congestion in the area, if the site access is narrow or has poor visibility or is close to road junctions, if there is inadequate turning space within the site, if the access is on to a classified road, or where the need to avoid on-street parking has already been recognised by the imposition of 'no waiting' restrictions.

Appearance can become an issue if there are new buildings involved or in the case of a conversion if there are additional parking areas or alterations to widen an access. These latter changes can harm the appearance of a property, particularly if it involves extra parking in the garden of a residential property without adequate depth of landscaping to screen it. Inevitably a nursery or playgroup will wish to advertise its presence. Unless signs are carefully controlled they will also unduly affect the appearance of a residential area.

## GUIDELINES

### 1. PARKING STANDARDS

In all cases, parking and vehicle manoeuvring must be kept separate from playspace.

**Day Nurseries.** Adequate car parking for staff must be provided within the site. The Council's approved standard for this is a minimum of one space for every 2 staff. Given the normal staffing ratio for day nurseries of 1:5, this equates to one space for every 10 children.

For parents' cars, small amounts of on-street parking may be acceptable. However for small nurseries, i.e. up to 20 children, it is reasonable to require that at least one space be available within the site. The larger nurseries, where there may be half a dozen cars present at the same time for the best part of an hour twice a day ought to be capable of making proper provision within the site.

The recommended standard is as follows:

Number of Children	Parking Requirements		
	Staff	Parents	Total
10	1	1	2
20	2	1	3
30	3	2	5
40	4	3	7
50	5	4	9
60	6	5	11

The spaces should be capable of being used independently (i.e. not double banked) and adequate turning space should be provided to enable cars to enter and leave in a forward direction. The access should preferably be 4.5m wide to be capable of taking two-way traffic.

Parking provision above the minimum standard may be required in cases where the possibility of on-street parking would cause a particular highway problem.

These standards could still result in some under-provision if a nursery were to change to a playgroup or to be associated with a workplace and have more concentrated starting and finishing periods.

Service vehicles e.g. food deliveries and refuse collections will also occur but it is not envisaged that any extra space should be provided for this. The numbers will not be large and the space provided for parents' cars will be available during the middle of the day.

**Playgroups.** As for day nurseries, staff parking is needed at the ratio of one space to every 2 staff (say one space for every 15 children). In the case of parents' parking, taking into account their generally greater involvement in the running of the group, one space for every 3 children is needed. The full requirements are probably unattainable in most cases of conversion of residential property. Any shortfall will result in on-street parking and the effects of this will need to be assessed.

**Nursery Classes.** Adding educational facilities to a school site is in principle acceptable and appropriate. It should be shown that there is or will be sufficient staff and casual (visitor) parking space within the whole school site to meet the Council's approved standards; where there is a deficiency in space for staff and casual visitors, the nursery classes should not encroach on the existing car park, without alternative provision being made.

It is not normally practicable for space for cars of parents dropping off or picking up children to be made available within a school site, but a new nursery class will normally mean only a small addition to the total number of parents' cars calling at the school. As long as starting and finishing times are staggered there will be a slight lengthening of the main periods of activity rather than worsening of any peak congestion. There will be additional but lesser periods of vehicular activity at lunch time.

## 2. TYPES OF PROPERTY SUITABLE FOR DAY NURSERIES

Day nurseries need to provide a pleasant environment, have outdoor play areas and offer convenient access to the families using them. Locations in residential areas are appropriate but suitable premises in mixed or commercial areas may also be possible and may be more appropriate for the larger nurseries.

Most recent planning applications for day nurseries have been for conversion of part of a residential property. The ideal property would have the following characteristics:

The building should be

- detached (so that nuisance through a party wall does not occur)
- set well back from the road (so that parents are less likely to park on the road)

The site should be

- sizeable in area (so that comings and goings and outdoor play are not inevitably close to neighbours and so that parking and manoeuvring space can be provided satisfactorily)

- with long road frontage (so that access activities and any on-street parking are not close to or in front of adjoining properties ; a corner property usually scores well on this criterion, and provides extra separation from neighbours on one side)
- well screened with boundary landscaping (to minimise the impact of additional car parking)
- with large garden (e.g. over 10 sq.m. per child ) so that outdoor play need not be unduly close to neighbours
- with clear lines of sight on either side of the egress(es).

Neighbouring properties should be

- set well back from the road (so that they are not unduly affected by the extra activities in the road)
- with large back gardens (so that outdoor play is not unduly close)
- in non residential use (as these are less likely to be affected by the extra activity).

The type of road should be

- not a principal road (principal roads such as the A56 are the primary traffic routes in the Borough and there will be a presumption against day nurseries on such roads for reasons of safeguarding traffic flows and public and highway safety)
- not very quiet (in a very quiet road the extra activity may be unduly disturbing)
- not very congested (since the additional activity may add unacceptably to the problems)
- not a cul-de-sac (since these will usually be very quiet and those parking on-street will have to carry out extra turning manoeuvres)
- without 'no waiting' restrictions (because on-street parking would be likely to occur and cause problems).

Properties will not necessarily need to have all these characteristics to be acceptable, although the larger day nurseries will certainly need most of them. Much will depend on the number of children involved. In brief, the fewer the children the wider the range of properties which will be suitable for a day nursery.

Mid terraced properties and flats will inevitably be deficient in so many of the desirable characteristics that they are not likely to be acceptable for even a small nursery. End terraced and semi-detached houses and detached houses on small sites are also likely

to be unsuitable. Larger than average semi-detached properties on substantial sites may occasionally be suitable, depending on the number of children. Larger detached properties with large gardens are most suitable.

### 3. **TYPES OF PROPERTY SUITABLE FOR PLAYGROUPS**

Playgroup parking requirements are such that the most suitable premises will be those already used as places of assembly, such as community centres and church halls. 90% of playgroups in the Borough use this type of accommodation. Use of residential property is possible on the same lines as the guidance for day nurseries, but with the higher parking standard.

### 4. **SIGNS**

Signs should be small, preferably set back from the road frontage, and generally akin to a professional plate on a doctor's or dentists's surgery.

## **CONDITIONS**

In the event of planning permission being granted, it is likely that conditions will be attached to the permission to cover the following:

- maximum number of children
- hours of operation
- provision of parking and access facilities
- retention of parking and access facilities
- landscaping and boundary treatment
- use limited to day nursery/play group only.

DC/JW/KMR