

Item 7

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING APPLICATIONS - COUNTY MATTERS

1. 7/2007/0595/CM

APPLICATION DATE: 26 September 2007

PROPOSAL: PROPOSED NEW SURE START CENTRE

LOCATION: MIDDLESTONE MOOR PRIMARY SCHOOL ROCK ROAD
SPENNYMOOR CO DURHAM

APPLICANT: Durham Sure Start
Durham County Council, County Hall, Durham ,

CONSULTATIONS

1. SPENNYMOOR TC
2. Cllr. B.M. Ord
3. Cllr. Liz Maddison
4. Cllr. Elizabeth M Wood
5. BUILDING CONTROL
6. ENGINEERS
7. ENV. HEALTH
8. L.PLANS
9. LANDSCAPE ARCH

This application is for development by Durham County Council and will therefore be dealt with by the County Council under Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992. The views of the Borough Council have been sought upon the proposal as a consultee.

THE PROPOSAL

Planning permission is being sought for the erection of a Sure Start Children's Centre located adjacent to the *Middlestone Moor Primary School* and *Rainbow Nursery School*. The application site presently forms an area of landscaping to the immediate northeast of the school and nursery buildings. To the east of the site lies a large area of undeveloped open amenity space which forms the remainder of the school playing field. To the west this site falls adjacent to West Terrace/Rock Road and numerous residential properties, with allotment gardens backing onto the rear of Windsor Avenue to the immediate north.

Presently the existing Middle School and Nursery School site is accessed from the west via an existing vehicular access linking to Rock Road. This proposed community facility has been located in such a way so as to make use of this existing vehicular access, with development also including the creation of a segregated, enclosed parking area to the immediate west of this new building, with provision for 6no. parking bays (including 1no. disabled bay) and a bicycle parking area.

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Submitted plans show the proposed building to be of single storey design measuring approximately 14 metres square, with a hipped roof design with a maximum height of approximately 5 metres. It will provide internal space for day care facilities for children between 0-5 years old, alongside training and consultation facilities to be used by parents; family health services, family support and parental outreach services to the local community as per the Sure start programme objectives. The centre will also have provision for a toy library, new external play area to be used by day care facilities, and a training kitchen to be used for training and development activities with parents and carers which will be accessible to everyone.

Externally this building is shown to be enclosed by 1800mm high paladin fencing surrounding the Surestart centre, and a segregated, secure outdoor play area to the rear of the building, away from the aforementioned highway access and adjacent to the existing school playing field.

CONSULTATION AND PUBLICITY

- **Sedgefield Borough Forward Plans** - No objections on policy grounds,
- **Sedgefield Borough Highways Engineer** - No objections on highway grounds,
- **Sedgefield Borough Environmental Health** - No objections,
- **Sedgefield Borough Landscape Architect** - Numerous issues have been raised to this proposal, with a summary of the main points raised as follows:
 - The proposed facility is to be located on land that presently contains a buffer planting strip which will be lost as a result of this development,
 - In addition, there is an internal boundary hedgerow and two standard trees which would also be lost.
 - This land is identified in the Open Space Needs Assessment as an area of amenity open space, with any loss contrary to Policy L5 (*Safeguarding areas of open space*).
 - The existing bund and planting on this site provides a valuable screen and buffer between the school site, the nearby allotments and the residential development to the north.
 - It is understood that the aforementioned bund was created at the time this school was rebuilt, and when a land drainage scheme was implemented on the school playing fields.

No other comments have been received in response to the consultation exercise.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The Sure Start initiative is gaining momentum throughout the country, and aims to place vital facilities within communities where they can easily be accessed by young families needing support. The provision of a new Surestart facility in this location (within 2 miles of Spennymoor Town Centre) in the heart of a residential area of Middlestone Moor forms part of the ongoing Surestart Phase II programme, and will help with Surestart government programmes objectives to achieve better outcomes for children, parents and communities through the increase of the availability of childcare for all children. It will also provide a facility for the improvement of health and development of young children and provide support for parents in their aspirations to return to employment.

In its essence this scheme will provide a valuable community facility for the people of Spennymoor and surrounding areas in accordance with adopted Local Plan Policies H18

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(*Acceptable Uses Within Housing Areas*) and L11 (*Development of new or improved Leisure and Community Buildings*) which encourage community facilities in residential areas where they:

- Will not significantly harm the living conditions for nearby residents,
- Are appropriate in scale and character to the surrounding area,
- Make adequate provision for car parking and access, and
- Comply with other plan policies,

In considering the merits of the proposal this application, it is noted that although this proposal will involve the creation of a new building within a residential area, this building will lie in close proximity to existing educational and community facilities with sufficient separation between this facility and nearby residential addresses. It has been explained that this application has only been submitted following extensive consultation with key stakeholders and interested parties which looked into the possibility of utilising surplus space within the existing school buildings. However, the distribution of this space was not suited to the needs of this new use and substantial building work was required which would have disrupted the adjacent uses.

This building has been designed in such a way so as to integrate and sympathise with the older residential dwellings in this area and the more recently erected school structure. This new facility will not appear incongruous to the surrounding street scene, but rather integrate into its surroundings in accordance with the requirements of Local Plan Policy D1 (*General Principles for the Design and Layout of new developments*), which sets out requirements for the design of proposed developments in terms of taking account of landform, relationship to adjacent land uses, landscaping, energy conservation, vehicular and pedestrian access etc.

In terms of access and parking provision, it has been explained how the site will include provision for 6no. segregated parking bays including disabled provision. It will also include bicycle parking facilities (although it has been noted that bike racks should be sited away from the vehicular parking area for safety reasons). Also being located in a central, easily accessible location, this proposal is also seen to comply with Local Plan Policy D3 (*Design for access*) which ensures development allows for satisfactory access and safe provision for all highway users. Furthermore, Highways Engineers have raised no objections to this proposal which utilises an existing vehicular access of Rock Road.

As explained, objections have been raised to this proposal by the Sedgefield Borough Landscape Architect who feels this scheme would result in the loss of a valuable area of established open amenity space and a landscaped buffer strip, contrary to Local Plan Policy L5 (*Safeguarding areas of open space*). However, on this occasion it is noted how the land to be occupied by this development presently consists of only a small part of a much larger playing field area, with possibility that through this scheme, some form of appropriate landscaping may be provided elsewhere on site. It is not considered that the loss of this small area of open space (which is currently enclosed and accessible to users of the school only) will be significantly noticed or detrimental to the surrounding locality, with the possibility of nearby landscaped improvements seen to comply with Policy L5(B) which involves the enhancement of nearby areas of open space.

In view of the foregoing, it has been considered reasonable to request that the committee consider imposing a recommendation that suitable landscaping schemes and the satisfactory

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implementation of these schemes be implemented as part of this planning decision by way of condition should it be approved by the County.

In conclusion, it is considered that the proposed development meets many of the requirements of the Sedgefield Borough Local Plan, being considered to comply with Local Plan Policies H18, L11, D1 and D3. The objections of the Borough Landscape Architect have been taken into consideration; with it considered that this proposal provides an excellent opportunity to provide a valuable community facility to this local area, whilst facilitating landscape improvements in the immediate vicinity to the benefit of the area as a whole. It is not considered that the objections which have been raised carry sufficient weight to justify any recommendation other than one of conditional approval on this occasion.

HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

It is considered that in general terms, the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 have been taken into account in dealing with the above application.

SECTION 17 OF THE CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998

Officers have considered, with due regard, the likely effect of the proposal on the need to reduce crime and disorder as part of the determination of this application, in accordance with section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. In reaching a recommendation to grant planning permission, officers consider that the proposal will not undermine crime prevention or the promotion of community safety.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council raises no objections to this proposal subject to:

1. Appropriate landscaping being provided along the perimeter of the site to compensate for the loss of the existing landscaped buffer.
2. Particular attention being paid to the design of the proposed fencing surrounding the site and its impact on the surrounding area.

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2. 7/2007/0601/CM

APPLICATION DATE: 27 September 2007

PROPOSAL: PROPOSED NEW SURE START CHILDRENS CENTRE WITH LINK TO EXISTING SCHOOL BUILDING

LOCATION: FISHBURN PRIMARY SCHOOL FISHBURN CO DURHAM

APPLICANT: Durham Sure Start
Durham County Council , County Hall, Durham , DH1 5UQ

CONSULTATIONS

1. FISHBURN P.C.
2. Cllr. J. Burton
3. Cllr. T. Ward
4. Cllr. D Chaytor
5. ENGINEERS
6. ENV. HEALTH
7. LANDSCAPE ARCH

This application is for development by Durham County Council and will therefore be dealt with by the County Council under Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992. The views of the Borough Council have been sought upon the proposal as a consultee.

THE PROPOSAL

Planning permission is being sought for the erection of a Sure Start Children's Centre located adjacent to Fishburn Primary School. The Sure Start initiative aims to place vital facilities within communities where they can easily be accessed by young families needing support. The provision of a new Surestart facility in this location aims to conform to the ongoing Surestart Phase II programme, and will help to meet with the Surestart government programmes objectives to achieve better outcomes for children, parents and communities through the increase of the availability of childcare for all children. It will also provide a facility for the improvement of health and development of young children and provide support for parents in their aspirations to return to employment.

The centre is proposed to be partially erected on land within the curtilage of the school and an agricultural field adjacent the school premises. The area within the curtilage of the school is predominantly grassed with the exception of a boundary hedgerow. The agricultural field is generally level with and utilised for arable agricultural purposes.

The proposed building will measure 26m in length by a maximum of 18m in width, the pitched roof will have a maximum height of 5.5m. The building will be detached with the exception of a small walkway to the existing school. Windows are proposed on all elevations of the proposal

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along with an amenity area to the north, south and west of the site. Access to the site will be achieved from the current entrance to the school from the highway East View; the existing car park will be extended to provide additional parking facilities within the complex.

The nearest residential property, 12 Greenside Close will be located approximately 27m away from the proposed building.

Fencing is proposed to enclose the building, however no details have been submitted.

CONSULTATION AND PUBLICITY

- **Sedgefield Borough Forward Plans** – Objections, outside of residential framework
- **Sedgefield Borough Highways Engineer** - No objections on highway grounds,
- **Sedgefield Borough Environmental Health** – No objections, limit working hours
- **Sedgefield Borough Building Control** – Building Regulations Approval required,
- **Sedgefield Borough Landscape Architect** – Awaiting response

- **Fishburn Parish Council** – Objections over traffic implications and highway safety.

No other comments have been received in response to this consultation exercise.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The main considerations in regard to this application is the principle of development, impact on the character of the surrounding area, impact on the privacy and amenity of neighbouring residents and the impact on highway safety.

Principle of development

Part of the proposed site is located outside of the residential framework of Fishburn village as identified by policy H8 of the adopted Sedgefield Local Plan. Within the local plan there is no provision for the erection of community facilities outside of the residential framework. However there is provision within National Planning Policy Statement 7 for the erection of small-scale, local facilities (e.g. childcare facilities) to meet community needs outside identified local service centres, particularly where they would benefit those residents who would find it difficult to use more distant service centres. The policy states that these local facilities should be located within or adjacent to existing villages and settlements where access can be gained by walking, cycling and (where available) public transport.

The design and access statement accompanying the application explains that the initial concept for the scheme focused on the idea of a standalone facility on the site currently occupied by the school car park.

This option was not considered to be acceptable as it would have encroached into an amenity area.

As the site is predominately located outside the residential framework and as there is not a direct requirement that a sure start facility should be located next to an existing school, it is recommended that a sequential test is undertaken to establish whether there are any suitable alternative sites within the village limits that could reasonably accommodate the facility.

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Should the relevant Planning Authority be satisfied that no other suitable sites are available within Fishburn Village and that the location of the proposal is considered acceptable, it is recommended that a comprehensive landscaping scheme is undertaken to provide a clearly defined boundary to discourage any future potential development and to define the village limits.

Impact on the character of the surrounding area

There is no defined architectural style within the surrounding area due to the presence of modern detached dwellings to the south and older linked terraced properties to the west. The existing school building is mixed in design with a hipped roof to the front and a large flat roofed area to the rear. It is therefore considered that the proposal will not be out of character with surrounding properties or create an incongruous feature.

As the existing boundary treatments are to be removed adjacent to the agricultural field the school buildings and proposed building would become significantly more prominent from the open countryside, it is therefore again recommended that a comprehensive landscaping scheme is incorporated to the proposal to screen the development.

Impact on privacy and amenity of neighbouring residents.

A separation distance of 24m will be evident from the proposed building and the nearest residential property, it is considered that this conforms to the requirements of supplementary planning guidance note 3 and it is unlikely that any loss of privacy will arise for neighbouring residents. However it is proposed that a play area will be created in between the building and the rear of Greenside Close. This could lead to a loss of privacy and amenity for neighbouring residents (if only generally limited to weekdays and between 9am-6pm). In order to address this problem it is recommended that a landscaped buffer is erected on the boundary to screen the dwellings and help prevent the transfer of noise.

Highway Safety

Fishburn Parish Council have raised objections regarding highways safety. However, as no objections have been raised by this Councils Highways Engineer it is recommended that the County Council seek the views of their Highway Engineers regarding the concerns expressed by Fishburn Parish Council.

Conclusion

It is considered that the proposed development will not significantly impact on neighbouring land users providing that the building and play area is suitably screened. However it is recommended that a sequential test is undertaken to establish whether there are more suitable sites within the village framework and that a comprehensive landscaping scheme is undertaken.

HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

It is considered that in general terms, the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 have been taken into account in dealing with the above application.

SECTION 17 OF THE CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998

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Officers have considered, with due regard, the likely effect of the proposal on the need to reduce crime and disorder as part of the determination of this application, in accordance with section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. In reaching a recommendation to grant planning permission, officers consider that the proposal will not undermine crime prevention or the promotion of community safety.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that prior to making a decision that the County Council:

- Undertake a sequential test is undertaken to establish whether there are any more suitable sites within the village limits that can reasonably accommodate the facility.
 - Ensure that a comprehensive landscaping scheme is incorporated in to the proposal to screen the development from the east.
 - It is recommended that particular attention be paid to the design of the boundary treatments to the site and its impact on the surrounding area, with no details of this fencing shown on submitted plans. It is considered that this matter should be dealt with by way of a planning condition, given the limited details shown on submitted plans.
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