

Introduction

- 1 As part of the ongoing Sure Start Phase II programme it is proposed to provide a Children's Centre at Middlestone Moor Primary School. The centre would provide training, consultation and development facilities for parents, carers and children.

Proposal

- 2 The proposal involves the construction of a detached single storey pitched roof building (13.3m long, 13.5m wide and 5m to the highest point on the roof) on land to the north of the existing school adjacent to the Rainbow Nursery School. The building would incorporate 2 meeting rooms, toilets and baby changing facilities, storage space, buggy park, lobby/reception area, an office, kitchen and a consultation room. External elevations would be finished in buff brickwork with blue engineering brick detailing. The hipped roof would be finished in smooth grey tiles, with an apex skylight in the centre. Windows and glazed doors would be double glazed with blue aluminium frames. A glazed canopy with a curved roof would extend over the entrance to the building. The design and appearance of the building is intended to match that of the existing school.
- 3 No formal play areas are proposed as part of the development, as the building is primarily intended for mixed group training purposes. Creche facilities during training sessions would be provided by partitioning off half of the meeting room, a child's toilet and baby changing facilities would adjoin this area of the meeting room. Grassed areas would be retained on three sides of the building with some tree planting to the south east. A 1.8m high paladin fence would enclose the building and associated area of open space.
- 4 Vehicular and pedestrian access to the site would be taken from Rock Road utilising and extending the existing access to Rainbow Nursery which fronts the main road. A car park would be positioned to the front of the building accommodating 6 spaces (including 1 disabled space) and a footpath would be positioned along its northern edge. Bicycle storage facilities would be provided off the footpath.
- 5 Four Sure Start staff would be employed at the building. Anticipated operating times are 8am – 6pm Monday to Friday.

Consultations and Representations

- 6 Sedgefield Borough Council (consulted 25 September 2007) raise no objections to the proposal subject to:
 - Appropriate landscaping being provided along the perimeter of the site to compensate for the loss of the existing landscaped buffer.

- Particular attention being paid to the design of the proposed fencing surrounding the site and its impact on the surrounding area.

Comment: Conditions regarding landscaping and fencing would be attached should planning permission be granted for this development to ensure the impact upon local amenity and the surrounding area is not adversely affected.

- 7 Spennymoor Town Council (consulted 25 September 2007) has not commented on the application.
- 8 The application has been advertised on site and neighbouring residents notified. No representations have been received.

Planning Comment

Planning Policy

- 9 The proposed Sure Start building would provide a nursery/community facility on a school site, adjacent to an existing nursery and is acceptable in principle in this location. Policy L11 (Development of New or Improved Leisure and Community Buildings), Policy D1 (General Principles for the layout and Design of New Developments) and Policy D2 (Design for People) of the Sedgefield Borough Local Plan are relevant planning policies.
- 10 The site is not considered to fall within the playing field area designated as safeguarded open space under Policy L5 of the Sedgefield Borough Local Plan. Policy L5 is not included in the list of policies from the Sedgefield Borough Local Plan saved under a direction from the Secretary of State and therefore expired on 27 September 2007.

Design and Appearance

- 11 Middlestone Moor Primary School is a single storey building constructed within the last 10 years following fire damage to the original school. The adjacent Rainbow Nursery School was provided more recently. The proposed Sure Start Centre would reflect the design and materials of the Primary School building. It would be relatively self contained and set in open space to the rear of the nursery and would be appropriate to its setting. A landscaping belt is currently located on this area of the school site, part of which would have to be removed to facilitate the development. However 10 new trees would be planted to the south of the proposed building which would compensate for the loss of landscaping and some of the existing trees would be translocated as part of the proposal.

Residential Amenity

- 12 The closest residential properties to the proposed building would be approximately 40 metres to the west on West Terrace. The rear elevations of these properties would not directly face the proposed Sure Start building and the perimeter fence and hedging would provide screening. Properties in Windsor Avenue to the north, Rock Road to the west, Beech Avenue to the south and Ash Grove to the east would have views of the proposed building at a greater distance and against the backdrop of the existing Primary School Building and Nursery School. Given the size and siting of the proposed building it would not have an adverse visual or local amenity impact.

Highways

- 13 Middlestone Moor Primary School currently employs 18 full time and 8 part time staff and there are 16 car parking spaces available in the existing car park. The proposed car park would provide a further 6 spaces (including 1 disabled space) and combined with the school would exceed the level of car parking as defined in the County Council's Accessibility and Parking Guidelines by approximately 9 spaces. Rock Road can be busy and on street parking difficult especially when parents drop off and pick up children around the school. Nevertheless only one recorded personal injury accident has occurred in proximity to the site in the last ten years at the junction between Rock Road and Central Drive. Although there is a management concern that the identified level of parking within the scheme is made available this is to avoid unauthorised parking by visitors on the adjacent nursery school site. Most users of the facility are not expected to arrive by car and suitable pedestrian and cycle provision would be made available. The Head of Highways Management is satisfied with these and the parking arrangements and does not object to the proposal.
- 14 The Primary School has a travel plan and having received some initial funding for completing the plan is continuing a road safety awareness programme for children at the school. Other recommendations would be carried out as funding becomes available. A survey undertaken as part of the school travel plan identified that approximately 60 - 70% of pupils walk to and from school and that approximately 64% of pupils live within half a mile of the school.
- 15 The proposed Sure Start Centre would serve the wards of Middlestone and Spennymoor. It would have a maximum visitor occupancy of 10-12 and 12-15 in the two meeting rooms although Sure Start anticipate that it would rarely achieve this because of the need to accommodate parents and children in most training sessions. The consulting room would normally be used by one healthcare professional at a time seeing individuals and families on an appointment basis.
- 16 Right of access across the land owned by the neighbouring Rainbow Nursery was agreed in the contract when the County Council sold the land to the developer.

Recommendation and Reasons

- 17 The proposal would fulfil a local need and provide a base for the co-ordinated provision of services related to parenting and young children in Middlestone Moor. The building would be located adjacent to the existing school building and nursery and can be satisfactorily integrated on the site and within the local area in planning terms.
- 18 I therefore **recommend** that planning permission be granted for the development subject to conditions relating to external materials and features, landscaping and drainage for the following reasons:
- i. The development would accord with Policies L11, D1 and D2 of the Sedgefield Borough Local Plan and would have no material conflict with other development plan policies.
 - ii. The proposed school can be satisfactorily accommodated in terms of its location, size, layout, appearance, access and parking and would relate acceptably to the surrounding area in terms of visual and residential amenity and traffic impacts.

No departure

Background Papers: Application, consultations and responses, site location plans.

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Local Member:	Councillor E Foster	

Provision of Sure Start Centre, Middlestone Moor Primary School, Rock Road, Spennymoor

