

REGULATORY COMMITTEE
19TH SEPTEMBER 2007

**BRADFORD ON AVON: SURE START CHILDREN'S CENTRE AT FITZMAURICE
PRIMARY SCHOOL, FROME ROAD FOR WILTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**
Application No. W/07/09006

Purpose of Report

1. To consider the above application and to recommend that planning permission be granted subject to conditions.

The Site

2. The site lies within the boundary of Fitzmaurice Primary School and is currently occupied by a single storey storage building. To the south of the storage building is an area of tarmac, to the east and north is mown grassland and 3 metres to the west is a single storey residential property.
3. A location plan is attached at **Appendix 1** and a site plan at **Appendix 2**.

Planning History

4. W.03.1020 Provision of two new classrooms, toilets and staff room and the removal of three single mobile classrooms. Planning permission granted 1st August, 2003.

The Proposal

5. Children's Centres are integral to the Government's 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children Programme' which seeks to provide support for families with children under five.
6. Fitzmaurice Primary School has been identified as a site for a Children's Centre as it is within an area of disadvantage. Disadvantage indicators include low income, health deprivations, and barriers to housing and services. In addition, the school is considered to be well placed as a hub for the delivery of services for local residents.
7. The Centre would include a meeting room for use by childminders, community groups, health and social workers and a small interview room for private meetings and one to one consultations. In addition, a space would be provided for drop-in services for parents and carers. The Centre would be available to other schools and services in the area to meet the requirement for extended services.
8. By placing the Centre in the middle of the area of disadvantage it is expected that most families would walk to the Centre thus not increasing the volume of traffic to the school. Many of the families and children who would use the Centre are already involved with the Primary School. In addition, many of the services would be taken out to the surrounding villages rather than people coming into the Centre for appointments. However, 5 or 6 additional car parking spaces, including a disabled space would be needed on site to accommodate the Centre Manager and visiting professionals.

9. The Centre, which would be built on the site of a demolished storage building would be a single storey, rectangular building with a standard pitched roof to the north. The southern elevation would have a steeply pitched roof (50°) to allow for the installation of solar water heating panels. The proposed materials are a Bathstone block with Sandtoft clay tiles to match the existing school roof and aluminium clad timber windows.

Planning Policy

10. The following policies are considered relevant to this application:
- Policy DP1 of the Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan 2016
 - Policies CF1, C17, C18 and C34A of the West Wiltshire District Plan 2004

Consultations

11. **West Wiltshire District Council** – no objection in principle, but wish the Council to take the Town Council's comments on board.
12. **West Wiltshire District Council – Environmental Health Officer**- no objection.
13. **Bradford on Avon Town Council** – comment that this is a worthy effort to improve lives of local families would be enhanced by good architecture. However, recommend refusal on account of design being pedestrian and not incorporating Local Plan policies to enhance and preserve the Conservation Area.
14. **Local Member - Mr. M. Hewson** – no response received.
15. **Countryside Section** – advise that recommendations of the ecological survey are conditioned as appropriate. Suggest inclusion of earth pockets in the gabion wall which could be planted with rockery/alpine type plants.
16. **Local Highway Authority** – no objection subject to an approved School Travel Plan being in place before development commences.
17. Copies of the consultation responses are available for inspection in the **Members' Room**.

Publicity

18. The application has been advertised in the local press and by site notices. A neighbour notification exercise was also carried out. Two letters of representation have been received but raised no objections.

Planning Considerations

19. The planning application must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The main issue to be considered is the acceptability of the design of the building.
20. Bradford on Avon Town Council recommends refusal of the application on the basis that the design is 'pedestrian' and fails to incorporate the District Plan's policies to enhance and preserve the Conservation Area. The Town Council has advised that the term 'pedestrian' is to be taken as meaning dull and uninspiring.

21. The application site is located within the Bradford on Avon Conservation Area. Policy C17 of the West Wiltshire District Plan states that the special character or appearance of the designated Conservation Areas and their settings will be preserved and enhanced. Policy C18 states that new development in a Conservation Area will only be permitted if the design satisfies a number of criteria including layout, scale and materials.
22. It should be noted that the Children's Centre is similar in design and materials to the most recent school extension, which received the support of the Town and District Councils. The proposed single storey, rectangular form and long windows on the eastern elevation relates well to the original school building and the proposed red clay tiles and Bathstone block are characteristic of buildings in the vicinity.
23. Officers are of the opinion that as the design of the Centre pays due regard to adjacent buildings in addition to being suitable for its purpose, the design is appropriate to its setting and would preserve the appearance of the Conservation Area. It is felt that the Town Council's criticism in this respect is unjustified.
24. The proposed design also accords with policies to reduce the environmental impacts of new buildings. Policy C34A of the West Wiltshire District Plan states that development will only be permitted where all practical measures to reduce resource consumption have been included. The Centre would incorporate solar panels to provide water heating and would use the crushed material from the demolished store in its construction. The use of full height windows, sun pipes and roof lights would provide natural light and ventilation thus reducing energy consumption. The importance of natural light and ventilation in the design of Children's Centres is emphasised in the guidance produced by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).
25. The proposal is considered to accord with Policy CF1 of the West Wiltshire District Plan as local community and education facilities will be permitted which are acceptable in terms of scale, siting, design and parking provision.

Conclusion

26. The proposal for a Children's Centre at Fitzmaurice Primary School is supported by Development Plan policies which aim to provide community services and improve the vitality and amenity of communities. The scale, design and materials of the building are appropriate to the setting and it is not considered that they would harm the character of the Conservation Area.

Recommendation

27. That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

Commencement

1. The development hereby permitted shall commence within three years of the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 51(1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. No development shall take place until samples of external materials to be used in the construction of the development hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity.

3. Prior to the commencement of development, the fencing to be provided between the Children's Centre and 12A and 12B Frome Road as shown on Drawing No. 330/03/G shall be erected.

Reason: To maintain the security and privacy of local residents.

Ecology

4. The clearance of vegetation from the application site shall only occur between the end of August and the beginning of March or following a search for active birds nests within the site by an appropriately qualified person. Clearance of vegetation from the affected area shall be undertaken with due care and attention. Should Great Crested Newts be found, they should be left to disperse of their own accord, all works should cease and Natural England consulted immediately as to how best to proceed.

Reason: To avoid the nominal bird nesting season and in the interests of wildlife conservation.

5. The strip of scrub/shrubbery along the northern boundary of the application site shall be retained in its entirety.

Reason: To retain the wildlife corridor identified by the Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey.

6. The outside face of the gabions used in the construction of the retaining wall shall include earth pockets in which shall be planted rockery/alpine type plants.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity.

Note to Applicant:

The existing School Travel Plan shall be updated to take account of the development hereby approved. The school should contact Ruth Durrant (School Travel Advisor on 01225 713432).

GEORGE BATTEN

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The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report.

Consultation replies and correspondence