

Case No: 0900078FUL (FULL PLANNING APPLICATION)

Proposal: REDESIGN OF PLAYGROUND AREA, INSTALL NEW BUGGY STORE AND CHANGES TO EXTERNAL FENCE

Location: UNIT 3 STOCKING FEN ROAD

Applicant: CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Grid Ref: 528521 285647

Date of Registration: 27.01.2009

Parish: RAMSEY

RECOMMENDATION - APPROVAL

1. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

- 1.1 The application relates to Ramsey Children's Centre, a pre school mothers' and toddlers' club housed in a single storey building within a complex which also includes a doctor's surgery, pharmacy and nursery. The complex is on the western side of Stocking Fen Road, opposite the Coop supermarket and to the rear of the Rivermill Apartments. Access to the building is from the parking area behind the building, the building therefore backs onto Stocking Fen Road.
- 1.2 The proposal, which relates to the area between the building and the road, consists of:
1. Laying a safety play surface in place of existing paving slabs over an area 7.5m by 8m.
 2. Enclosing this area with a 1.5m high mesh fence, which would have an emergency exit gate to the roadside footway.
 3. Constructing a steel framed, perspex clad secure buggy store 3.8m by 1.4m by 1.2m high within a further mesh fence 1.2m high, between the play area and the road.
 4. Constructing a ramped access to an existing door on the rear wall of the building.
- 1.3 The site is currently a paved area partly enclosed within a low wooden palisade fence, part of which has been demolished by a vehicle.
- 1.4 The site is just outside the Conservation Area boundary.

2. NATIONAL GUIDANCE

- 2.1 **PPS1: "Delivering Sustainable Development" (2005)** contains advice on the operation of the plan-led system.
- 2.2 **PPG15: "Planning and the Historic Environment" (1994)** sets out Government policies for the identification and protection of historic

buildings, conservation areas, and other elements of the historic environment. It explains the role played by the planning system in their protection.

For full details visit the government website <http://www.communities.gov.uk> and follow the links to planning, Building and Environment, Planning, Planning Policy.

3. PLANNING POLICIES

Further information on the role of planning policies in deciding planning applications can also be found at the following website: <http://www.communities.gov.uk> then follow links Planning, Building and Environment, Planning, Planning Information and Guidance, Planning Guidance and Advice and then Creating and Better Place to Live

3.1 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan (2003) Saved policies from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 are relevant and viewable at <http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk> follow the links to environment, planning, planning policy and Structure Plan 2003.

- None relevant

3.2 Huntingdonshire Local Plan (1995) Saved policies from the Huntingdonshire Local Plan 1995 are relevant and viewable at www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/localplan95

- **En5:** "Conservation Area Character" - development within or directly affecting conservation areas will be required to preserve or enhance their character and appearance.
- **En9-** "Conservation Areas" - development should not impair open spaces, trees, street scenes and views into and out of Conservation Areas.
- **En25:** "General Design Criteria" - indicates that the District Council will expect new development to respect the scale, form, materials and design of established buildings in the locality and make adequate provision for landscaping and amenity areas.

3.3 Huntingdonshire Local Plan Alterations (2002) Saved policies from the Huntingdon Local Plan Alterations 2002 are relevant and viewable at www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/localplan - Then click on "Local Plan Alteration (2002)

- None relevant

3.4 Policies from the Huntingdonshire Interim Planning Policy Statement 2007 are relevant and viewable at <http://www.huntsdc.gov.uk> click on Environment and Planning, then Planning then Planning+Policy then Informal policy statements where there is a link to Interim Planning Policy Statement 2007

- **B1** – Design Quality - developments should demonstrate a high quality of design in terms of layout, form and contribution to the character of the area.

- **B2** – Street scene – development proposals should make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of streets and public spaces.
- **B3** – Accessibility, Adaptability and Security – the location and design of new development should enable ease of access, have convenient and appropriate facilities and minimise the extent to which users feel at risk of crime.
- **B8** – Conservation Areas - states the criteria against which developments within or affecting a Conservation Area should be assessed.

3.5 Policies from the Huntingdonshire Local Development Framework Submission Core Strategy 2008 are relevant and viewable at <http://www.huntsdc.gov.uk> click on Environment and Planning then click on Planning and then click on Planning Policy where there is a link to the Local Development Framework Core Strategy.

- None relevant

4. **PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 None relevant

5. **CONSULTATIONS**

5.1 **Ramsey Town Council - OBJECTION** initially objected to the proposal on grounds of children's safety. Additional information was given to the Town Council which then reconsidered its response. The safety objection has been withdrawn having been satisfied but the Town Council has now objected to the design of the fencing.

6. **REPRESENTATIONS**

6.1 None received

7. **SUMMARY OF ISSUES**

7.1 The issues are: the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area, including the nearby Conservation Area and personal safety.

Effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area, including the nearby Conservation Area

7.2 The Children's Centre is operated by the County Council in leased premises. The facility is commissioned by 'Together for Children' and is part of a programme to provide 'Positive Outcomes for Under 5s'. The work would be funded by a 'Surestart' grant. It provides facilities for all children under 5 but has specific target groups such as children with disabilities. To continue its operation the Centre needs an outdoor play area where children are secure from abduction, a secure buggy store is also needed. The existing paved area has a surface which is unsuitable for children's play and the fence is not high enough to prevent an adult lifting a child out.

- 7.3 The area is at the rear of the building but faces onto the road and is therefore prominent in the street scene. To be acceptable in visual terms the fence needs to be as transparent and low as possible. In the context of the modern buildings both in the complex and at the supermarket opposite it is considered that an appropriately coloured weld-mesh fence would be acceptable. Adjacent units have low planting around their roadside boundaries and the applicants have agreed that the play area can be reduced in size (depth) to enable the buggy store to be moved back from the edge of the footway so that a roadside boundary hedge can be planted. It should be noted that the part of the taller fence which is not adjacent to the highway does not need planning permission. The proposal would comply with policies En5, En9, En25, B1, B2 and B8.

Personal safety

- 7.4 The Town Council's initial concerns about safety have been addressed by the applicants' explanation that parents/carers stay with their under 5's at all times, including during outside play time. Parents/carers will be able to leave their buggies securely in the buggy park and then walk around to the entrance from the car park using the footpath. The gates at the back of the play area that lead to the roadside footway will be kept locked at all times and are for emergency access only. Children and their parents/carers will only be able to access the play area from the building, not from the footpath running along Stocking Fen Road. It is considered that the fence will provide a safe outside play area for the children and the management regime will be a matter for the authority which inspects the facility. The proposal complies with policy B3.

Conclusion

- 7.5 The proposals will, with appropriate materials and landscaping, not detract from the street scene and will be capable of providing safe facilities for children. The development is in accordance with policies En5, En9, En25, B1, B2, B3 and B8. Having regard to applicable national and local policies and having taken all relevant material considerations into account, it is considered that planning permission should be granted in this instance.

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8. **RECOMMENDATION – APPROVE**, subject to the following conditions:

02003 Time Limit (3yrs)

Nonstand Revised proposals with landscaping

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

East of England Plan - Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy (May 2008)
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan, 2003
Huntingdonshire Local Plan, 1995
Huntingdonshire Local Plan Alterations (2002)

Huntingdonshire Interim Planning Policy Statement 2007
Huntingdonshire Local Development Framework Submission Core Strategy
2008

CONTACT OFFICER:

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