

SECTION D  
DEVELOPMENT TO BE CARRIED OUT BY THE COUNTY COUNCIL

Background Documents - the deposited documents, views and representations received as referred to in the reports and included in the development proposal dossier for each case and also as might be additionally indicated.

**Item D1**

**Proposed Children's Centre at Hersden Primary School,  
Shaftesbury Road, Hersden, Canterbury – CA/09/1951**

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 16 March 2010.

Application by Kent County Council Children, Families and Education for the development of a modified half core Children's Centre and associated car parking and play areas at Hersden Primary School, Shaftesbury Road, Hersden, Canterbury (CA/09/1951).

Recommendation: Planning permission be granted, subject to conditions.

Local Member(s): Mr. A. Marsh

Classification: Unrestricted

**Site**

1. Hersden is a village located to the north-east of the city of Canterbury accessed by the main A28 (Island Road) leading out of Canterbury towards Thanet. Hersden Primary School is located at the end of a residential cul-de-sac [Shaftesbury Road] which in turn is accessed from the main A28 via 'The Sycamores' and 'The Avenue' roads. The school is located on a parcel of land on the edge of the built-up area, consisting of the main school buildings to the west and open playing fields to the east. Beyond the school grounds to the north is open countryside used for agricultural purposes. To the south the school grounds are bordered by residential dwellings located on Shaftesbury Avenue. There are no specific Local Plan designations relating to this site.
2. The application site for the proposed Children's Centre is located to the southern boundary of the school grounds, immediately adjacent to marked out sports pitches and the boundary of No. 5 Shaftesbury Road. *A site location plan is attached on page D1.2*

**Proposal**

3. This application proposes the creation of a half core Children's Centre on a section of undeveloped grassland to the frontage of the school site. The proposed location is situated adjacent to an existing marked-out football pitch used by the school, and adjoining a residential boundary with No. 5 Shaftesbury Road. The application site would be accessed directly from the existing vehicle turning head located at the end of Shaftesbury Road. The proposal includes the provision of four dedicated parking bays, plus one accessible space for users of the centre. The half core Children's Centre is proposed to be used as a community facility to support existing nurseries in the surrounding area. It is proposed to operate as a separate unit from the school with the school having no direct control over its day-to-day operation.
4. The proposed modular building would contain a multi-purpose room for use by parents who are using the centre as well as a flexible space for use as a crèche and informal meeting room. An interview and medical room would be provided together with a consultation room, a kitchen, reception and office accommodation, toilets and dedicated baby changing facilities. To the front of the building a steel and polycarbonate-clad

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**Site Location Plan**

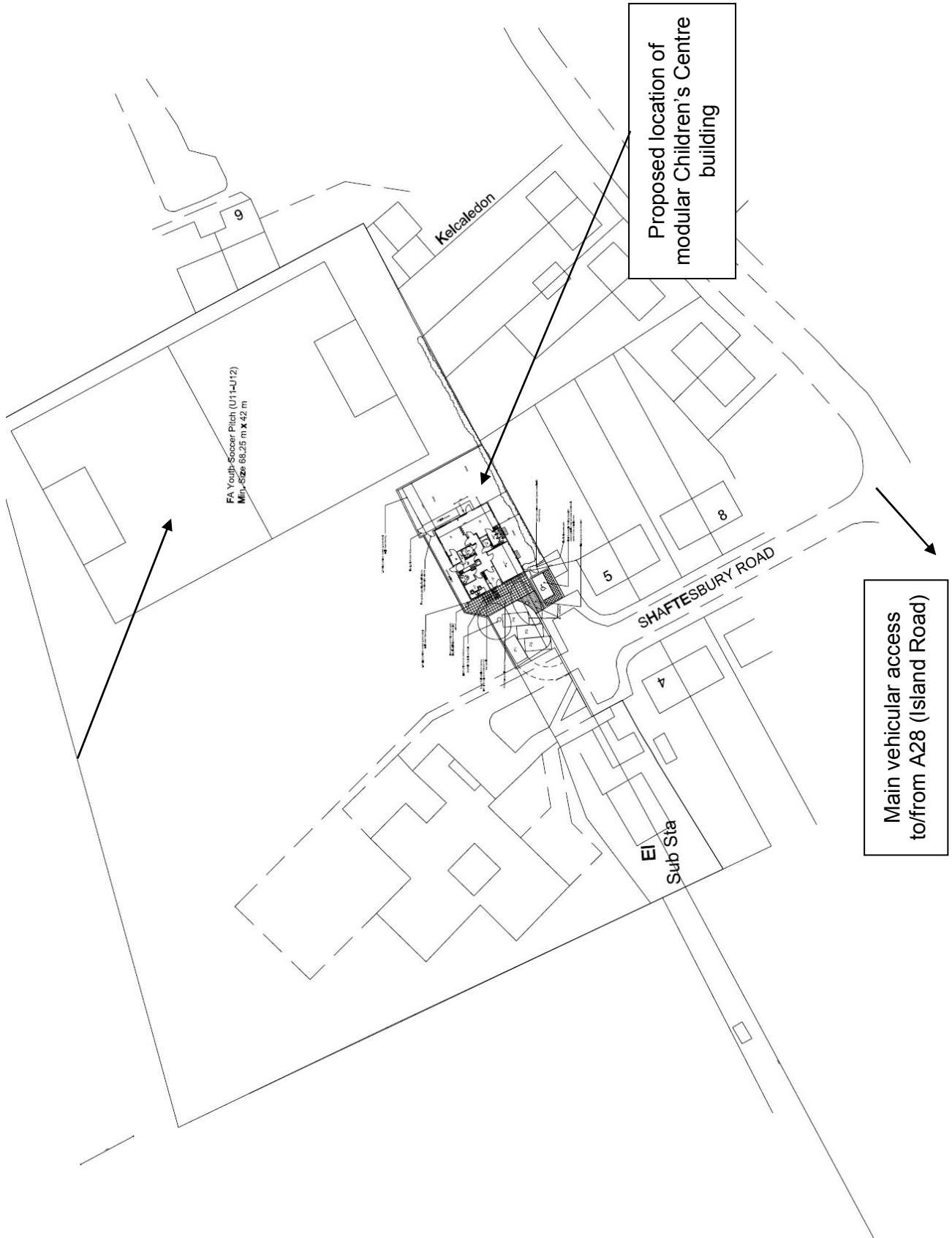


**Site Location Plan: Hersden Primary School**  
Scale 1:2500

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### Proposed Site Plan





**Proposed Children's Centre at Hersden Primary School, Shaftesbury Road, Hersden, Canterbury – CA/09/1951**

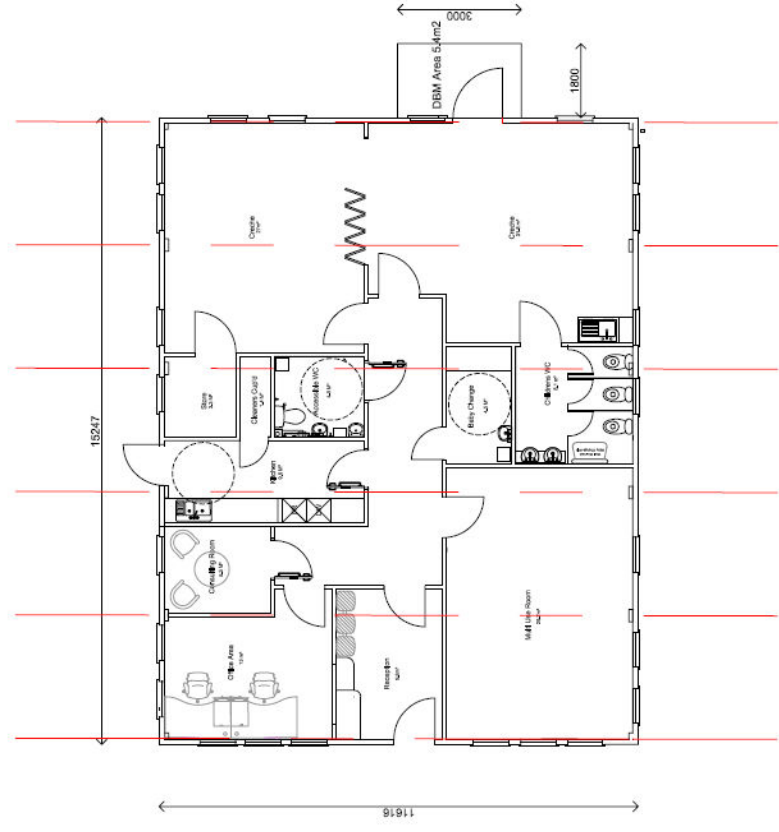
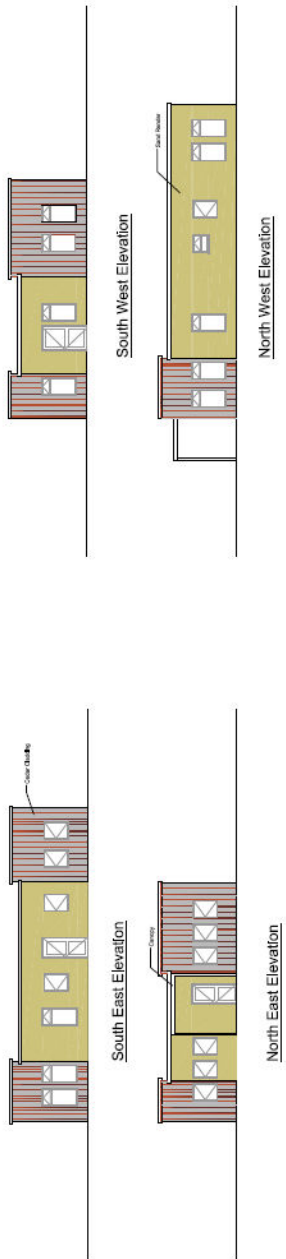
**Proposed Children's Centre Elevations**

**APPROVAL FOR DESIGN FREEZE**



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<b>Title:</b>	Employers Requirements GA
<b>Project:</b>	Children's Centre CPS Shaftesbury Road Hersden Kent
<b>Client:</b>	Kent County Council
<b>Issue:</b>	Planning
<b>Date:</b>	July 2009
<b>Scale:</b>	1:50 @ A1
<b>Revision:</b>	B
<b>Drawing No:</b>	GPM2/05/01



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canopy would be erected to provide shelter across the entrance, together with the provision of buggy parking facilities and cycle storage racks. To the rear of the proposed centre, a small area of hard-surfaced playground would be created, together with a larger area of soft landscaped gardens enclosed and separated from the existing school facilities by powder coated green weld mesh fencing at 1.8m high.

5. The proposed opening hours of the Centre would be from 8:00 to 18:00, five days a week for 48 weeks of the year. The majority of these hours would be within the existing school opening times. The centre would employ three members of staff on a regular basis with the number rising for special events. Staff employed would be encouraged to use public transport, walk and car share as part of a travel plan and it is anticipated that the employees will live locally. The application states that the Centre is expected to generate up to 30 visitors in a normal day, spread out over the 10 hours of operation. It has been stated that only when a particular event, such as a seminar is being provided, would there be a number of people arriving at any one time.
6. The application has been made on behalf of the County Council's Children, Families and Education Directorate. The scheme is one of a number of similar applications which have been built across the County as part of Central Government's National Sure Start Programme, funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). The main aim of the Sure Start Programme is to increase the availability of childcare for all children, improve health and emotional development for young children and support parents in their aspirations towards employment. The aim of the Children's Centre is to offer a range of health, adult education and family support services for the local community.
7. The proposed Children's Centre is of a modular type construction and would be built in major sections off-site and shipped to site and fixed on pre-constructed foundations. The building comprises of a single storey flat roofed unit with a total internal floor area of approximately 180 square metres. The external appearance of the building would comprise of a mixture of sand colour render and vertical natural-finish cedar wood cladding to the corners of the building. Part of the requirement for funding for this (and other Children's Centres across the county) is the requirement for the building to be constructed to have a minimum life span of at least 25 years. A plan showing the proposed external appearance of this Centre can be found on page D1.5.
8. The application sets out that the footprint for the Centre has largely been dictated by the available space within the school grounds, avoiding the need to compromise playing field provision at the school. The footprint has been positioned approximately 4 metres away from an existing well-vegetated boundary with no. 5 Shaftesbury Road. This boundary vegetation is proposed to be protected during construction operations. In addition, there are two existing trees located to the front of the proposed Centre. The application sets out that one of these trees will be retained, whilst the other would be removed in order to facilitate parking provision for the centre. A plan showing the two trees in relation to the proposals can be found on page D1.4.
9. The application sets out that the site proposed has been chosen after extensive consultation and deliberation through the Kent County Council Children's Centre Team with appropriate parties. The existing site as an educational establishment is seen as the only reasonable location for the development of a Children's Centre within the locality and its use and conjunction with the existing primary school would allow for a continuity of educational and additional needs and would encourage community use of the existing facilities.

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**Planning History**

10. The following planning history has been sought from both records held by the County Planning Authority and Canterbury City Council Planning Department:
- CA/98/0552/STU: Planning permission granted by Canterbury City Council in August 1998 for the siting of a mobile classroom north of the main vehicular entrance to Hersden Primary School for the Hersden under 5's Project;
  - CA/04/193: Planning permission granted by the County Planning Authority in March 2004 for the provision of a single court sports hall with changing accommodation to the rear of existing Hersden Primary School buildings; and
  - CA/07/1193: Planning permission granted by the County Planning Authority in September 2007 for the erection of a front porch and alteration of footpath to create access for disabled users.

**Planning Policy**

11. The Development Plan Policies summarised below are relevant to consideration of the application:

(i) The adopted 2009 **South East Plan**:

- Policy SP3** The prime focus for development in the South East should be in urban areas, in order to foster accessibility to employment, housing, retail and other services, and to avoid unnecessary travel.
- Policy CC1** The principle objective of the Plan is to achieve and maintain sustainable development in the region.
- Policy CC4** The design and construction of all new development, and the redevelopment and refurbishment of existing building stock, will be expected to adopt and incorporate sustainable construction standards and techniques
- Policy CC6** Actions and decisions associated with the development and use of land will actively promote the creation of sustainable and distinctive communities.
- Policy T4** Local development documents should adopt restraint-based maximum levels of parking provision for non-residential development, reducing provision in locations with good public transport, and ensure the provision of sufficient cycle parking at new developments.
- Policy S6** The mixed use of community facilities should be encouraged by local authorities, public agencies and other providers, through local development documents and other measures in order to make effective use of resources.
- Policy BE1** Seeks new development to help improve the built environment with design solutions relevant to local character, distinctiveness and sense of place.

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(ii) The adopted 2006 **Canterbury City Council Local Plan (Saved Policies)**:

**Policy BE1** – The Council will expect proposals of high quality design that respond to the objectives of sustainable development by having regard to, amongst others, the need for the development, accessibility and safe movement within the proposed development, the landscape character and way the development is integrated into the landscape, the conservation of natural features, and the form of the development.

**Policy NE5** – Development should be designed to retain trees, hedgerows, woodlands or other landscape features that make an important contribution to the amenity of the site and the surrounding area

**Policy C1** – In considering the location or control of new development, the Council will, amongst other matters, take account of the following principles: controlling the level and environmental impact of vehicular traffic; providing alternative modes of transport to the car by extending provision for pedestrians, cyclists and the use of public transport

#### **Consultations**

12. **Canterbury City Council:** has raised no objection to the application.

**Divisional Transportation Manager:** no objections to the application, subject to the provision of the off-street parking contained within the proposals. He notes that the development, without the parking provision proposed would lead to overspill parking in the vicinity, to the potential detriment of pedestrians, road users and the free flow of traffic.

**Environment Agency:** has raised no objection to the application, subject to advice offered to the applicant and the imposition of a condition on any forthcoming consent covering land contamination.

**Sport England:** has raised no objection to the application.

**Kent Police Architectural Liaison Officer:** makes recommendations relating to security of the proposed Children's Centre in terms of window and door specifications, external lighting, boundary fencing and landscape planting.

#### **Local Member**

13. The local County Member, Mr. A. Marsh, was notified of the application on the 11 December 2009.

#### **Publicity**

14. The application was publicised by the posting of a site notices at the main entrance to the school off Shaftesbury Road. In addition, 27 neighbouring residential properties were individually notified of the application.



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**Representations**

15. I have received a resident's petition objecting to the proposed Children's Centre signed by 9 residents from Shaftesbury Road and The Avenue. A summary of the main points of objection are outlined below:
- do not want any more traffic going up and down Shaftesbury Road
  - in this day and age when the Government are promoting healthy eating and fitness why are you taking away part of the children's play area?
  - years ago a playschool tried to put the same type of building there and that was turned down then, so why should it be granted now?
  - There is a fantastic building in the village called the neighbourhood centre [The Methodist Church, The Avenue, Hersden]. It has a garden, purpose built children's play area, lots of rooms and kitchen facilities. Why when there is a suitable building on the door step is another building needed?

**Discussion**Introduction

16. The application seeks planning permission for a new build modular single storey Children's Centre within the grounds of Hersden Primary School. The application is being reported to the Planning Applications Committee as a result of the objections received in the form of a resident's petition, as outlined in paragraph (15) above. In considering this proposal, regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph (11). Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore the proposal needs to be considered in the context of the Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity. In my opinion, the key material planning considerations in this particular case relate to the design and location of the proposed building in terms of any adverse impact on the existing school grounds/facilities and surrounding residential amenity, together with any highway impacts resulting from the proposal.

Location and design issues

17. The application site is located on undeveloped grassland to the front (southern) edge of the school grounds, immediately adjacent to the main vehicular access to/from the school and adjacent to the boundary of No. 5 Shaftesbury Road. The application site is located on the edge of the school's existing playing field, and as shown on the site plan on page D1.2 the proposals would not impede the School's ability to provide a marked-out football pitch within their grounds. Consultations have been undertaken with Sport England, the statutory body responsible for ensuring that playing field is not lost for development without special overriding circumstances, and it is noted that they have raised no objections to the proposals. Whilst the area in question forms part of amenity space around the main playing field, given the limited size of the school grounds, I am unable to identify an alternative parcel of land within the school grounds for such development. Therefore, in the absence of an objection from Sport England, I am minded not to raise an objection to the proposals on the basis of no significant loss of recreational facilities for the existing school. Furthermore, I note the general thrust of Development Plan Policy, most notably South East Plan Policy S6, which encourages the mixed use of community facilities in order to make effective use of existing resources. I therefore see no reason to presume against further development in

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principle within this site, subject to amenity and highway considerations as discussed below.

18. An important consideration in this instance is the proximity of the proposed Children's Centre building to the closest residential property (No. 5 Shaftesbury Road) in order to ensure that residential amenity would not be unduly impacted upon as a result of the proposals. I note that the modular building proposed comprises a single storey flat roofed building, which adjacent to two storey pitched roof residential dwellings would not appear overbearing. Furthermore, I note that the Children's Centre building would be partially screened behind an existing tree to be retained immediately adjacent to the vehicle turning head at the end of Shaftesbury Road. There is also a well-established boundary hedge between the school playing field and the boundary to No. 5 Shaftesbury Road which the applicant intends to preserve as part of the development proposals. Subject to the retention of one of the existing trees and mature hedgerow, I consider that the proposed Children's Centre building would have a limited impact on the wider street-scene and would not result in any significant detrimental harm to the adjoining residential dwelling. I therefore consider the proposals to be in line with the general thrust of Local Plan Policy NE5 in terms of retaining important landscape features in the locality.
19. The design of the proposed Children's Centre, whilst not in-keeping with the wider street-scene of two storey residential dwellings is more akin to that of the buildings found on the school site. The buildings at Hersden Primary School comprise 1960's flat roofed accommodation blocks interspersed with windows and curtain walling panels. Whilst the Children's Centre building would be located some distance from the main school buildings, I consider that the enhanced modular construction proposed would be appropriate in this local context and for the scale of development sought. Furthermore, I note that the proposed building comprises a mix of external treatments, including sand-coloured external render interspersed with vertical natural-finished cedar wood panelling wrapping around the corners of the building. In my opinion, I consider that the design and external appearance of the Children's Centre building is acceptable in this locality and context, and is in general conformity to the principles of Policy BE1 of the Local Plan.

Traffic and access issues

20. Another element of the application that requires consideration is the potential for the proposed Children's Centre use to generate additional traffic activity, including movements to and from the site, and whether this would result in an unacceptable impact on the surrounding area. Members will note that such concerns have been expressed through the residents' petition received, as summarised in paragraph (15) above. The application sets out that the Children's Centre proposed would operate 'drop-in' style facilities to support young families in the immediate local community, providing a community facility with crèche, meeting and staff accommodation.
21. The application proposes four dedicated car parking spaces plus one accessible bay as part of the proposals, immediately adjacent to the centre entrance. Whilst it is noted that there would be 3 full-time members of staff employed at the proposed Centre, with the number rising for special events, the application sets out that staff would be employed from within a close proximity to the site and would be expected to walk, cycle or car share to the centre.
22. The applicant states that all the centres in Kent have been strategically located to minimise travel distances for the majority of the residents it is intended to serve. The

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Sure Start scheme puts a great deal of emphasis on "buggy pushing distance" with the users of the centre encouraged to walk. It is estimated that the centre would have up to 30 visitors in a day; however the applicant advises that these visitors would be spread out over the 10 hours of operation and visiting primarily via an appointment system, rather than all on site at any one time. Only when a particular event, such as a seminar, is being provided would there be a number of people arriving at one time.

23. I consider that should the proposal be approved, there is a potential risk for traffic and congestion levels to increase on some occasions, but it is unlikely that this would be on a regular basis, or to be sufficient enough to recommend refusal of the application on these grounds alone. From a policy point of view, it is considered that the proposal accords with the general thrust of South East Plan Policy T4 by adopting a restraint-based maximum level of parking provision, by providing secure cycle storage facilities and encouraging users to access the centre in a sustainable manner. Furthermore, I note that the Divisional Transportation Manager has raised no objections to the proposals in respect of highway matters, subject to the provision of off-street parking included within the application. Accordingly, I am minded to agree with the professional highway advice received and would not seek to raise an objection to these proposals on highway matters.

#### Other issues

24. Members will note residents concerns, as detailed in paragraph (15) relating to the use of an alternative site within the Methodist Church on The Avenue in Hersden. I have sought clarification on this matter from the applicant who has confirmed that they have, over a two year period, undertaken extensive investigations into the use of this building, but unfortunately it was deemed not to be viable. Whilst I can recognise the concerns of local residents in terms of the desire to use existing accommodation in lieu of building new facilities, this matter is directly outside of the scope of planning permission. Members will be aware that it is for the Committee to determine whether this proposal is acceptable in principle on its own merits, as opposed to becoming involved in the procurement of alternative sites.
25. Members will also note that residential concerns have also been raised, as detailed in paragraph (15) above relating to a previous planning application refusal for a playschool at the site. Having carried out a search of the site's planning history from both County Council Planning and City Council Planning records, I have been unable to establish a history of such application refusal. In any case, I note that individual planning applications must be determined on their own merits as has been the case with this particular proposal.
26. For the reasons discussed above, I see no overriding reason why planning permission should not be granted for the community Children's Centre development in this instance.

#### **Conclusion**

27. Having regard to the Development Plan Policies, in addition to the material considerations raised by local residents in this case, I consider that the proposed single storey modular Children's Centre is in general conformity with the Development Plan. Whilst I note the concerns of the residents relating to highway matters and the use of an alternative building within the locality, I consider these are issues where either a planning objection could not be sustained or are matters directly beyond the scope of planning control. I therefore recommend that planning permission be granted as set out in paragraph (28) below.

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**Recommendation**

28. I RECOMMEND that PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED, SUBJECT TO conditions, including conditions to cover the following aspects:

- the standard time limit;
- the development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
- tree and hedge shown for retention be afforded protection during construction in accordance with the current British Standard;
- off-street parking (as detailed within the proposals) be provided prior to first occupation of Children's Centre, and thereafter be retained solely for that use for the duration that the Centre is in use.

Case officer – Julian Moat	01622 696978
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Background documents - See section heading
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