

**Community Children's Centre, Corner of Leysdown Road and Warden Bay Road, Sheerness – SW/07/1271**

A report by Head of Planning Applications Unit to Planning Applications Committee on 29 July 2008.

SW/07/1271 – Application by Kent County Council Children, Families, Health & Education for the construction of a single storey modular building for use as a community Children's Centre, including new pedestrian and vehicular access to Warden Bay Road, car park, hard surfacing, canopy, external storage units and fencing. Corner of Leysdown Road and Warden Bay Road, Sheerness.

Recommendation: Permission be granted.

**Local Members:** Mr A. Crowther

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Site**

1. The application site forms an area of land approximately 0.4 hectares which is part of an open field approximately 0.8km to the west of Leysdown, 1km south of Warden, 0.6km east of Bay View, and 3km east of Eastchurch. The site is located in a prominent position on the corner of Leysdown Road and Warden Bay Road, which form the main highway access to the respective settlements.
2. The site is bounded on to the south and east by the public highway and on the other two sides by the remainder of the field. Local holiday villages are positioned to the north and east, the closest of which is opposite the site across Warden Bay Road. These villages consist primarily of static holiday caravans and small chalets. Further residential property is located approximately 100m to the south-west across Leysdown Road – see attached location plan.
3. The application site falls outside the boundaries built-up area with the wider countryside, as identified in the Swale Borough Local Plan Proposals Map. The site is not subject to any specific designations and is not identified for any specific purpose in the Local Plan.

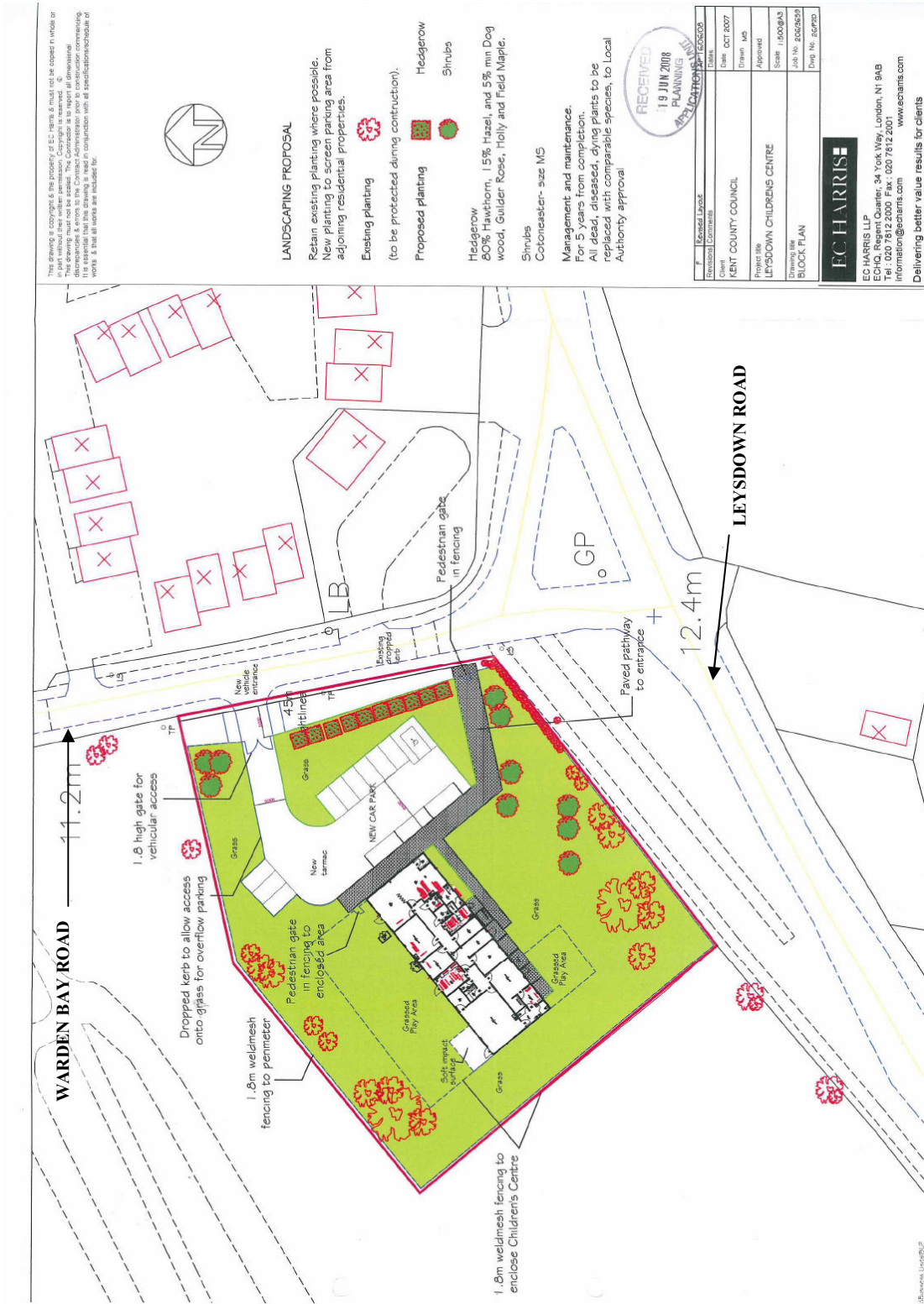
**Proposal**

4. The application proposes the creation of a community Children's Centre on a greenfield site between the settlements of Bay View, Leysdown and Warden. The Children's Centre would be housed in a new purpose-built single storey modular building that would be constructed off-site and transported in sections to be fixed to pre-constructed foundations. The development would create approximately 396 m<sup>2</sup> of floorspace for use as part of the proposed function. The building would be finished with a roughcast render system in a sand yellow colour, with sections of vertical oiled cedar boarding. UPVC windows, aluminium doors, a steel framed canopy and metal profiled roof panels are included within the proposed development. The building would be designed and warranted for a period of at least 25-years to meet the applicant's requirements. The supporting information received with the application confirms that the building would be designed to achieve a minimum Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) rating of GOOD, with a aspiration target of VERY GOOD.

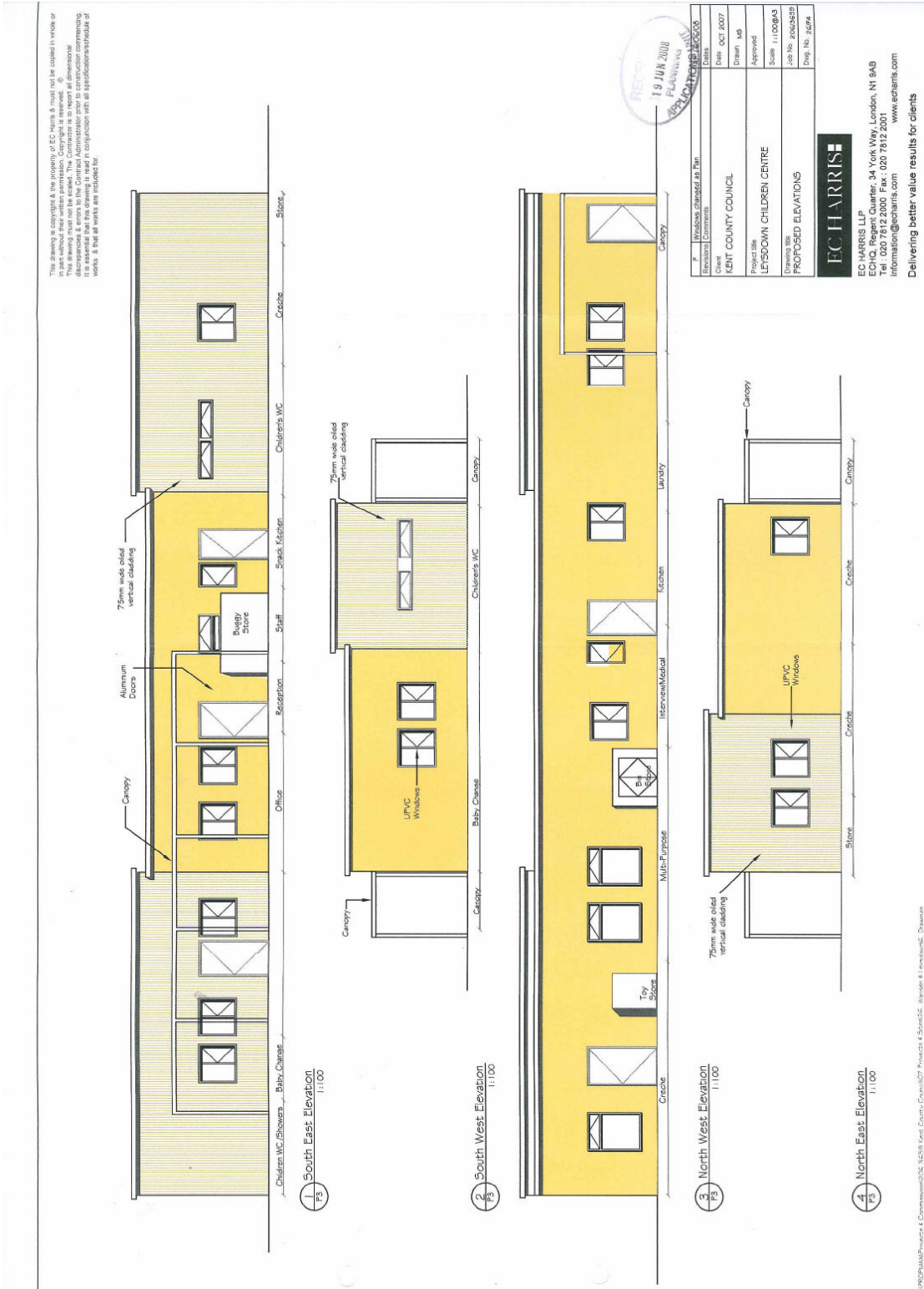
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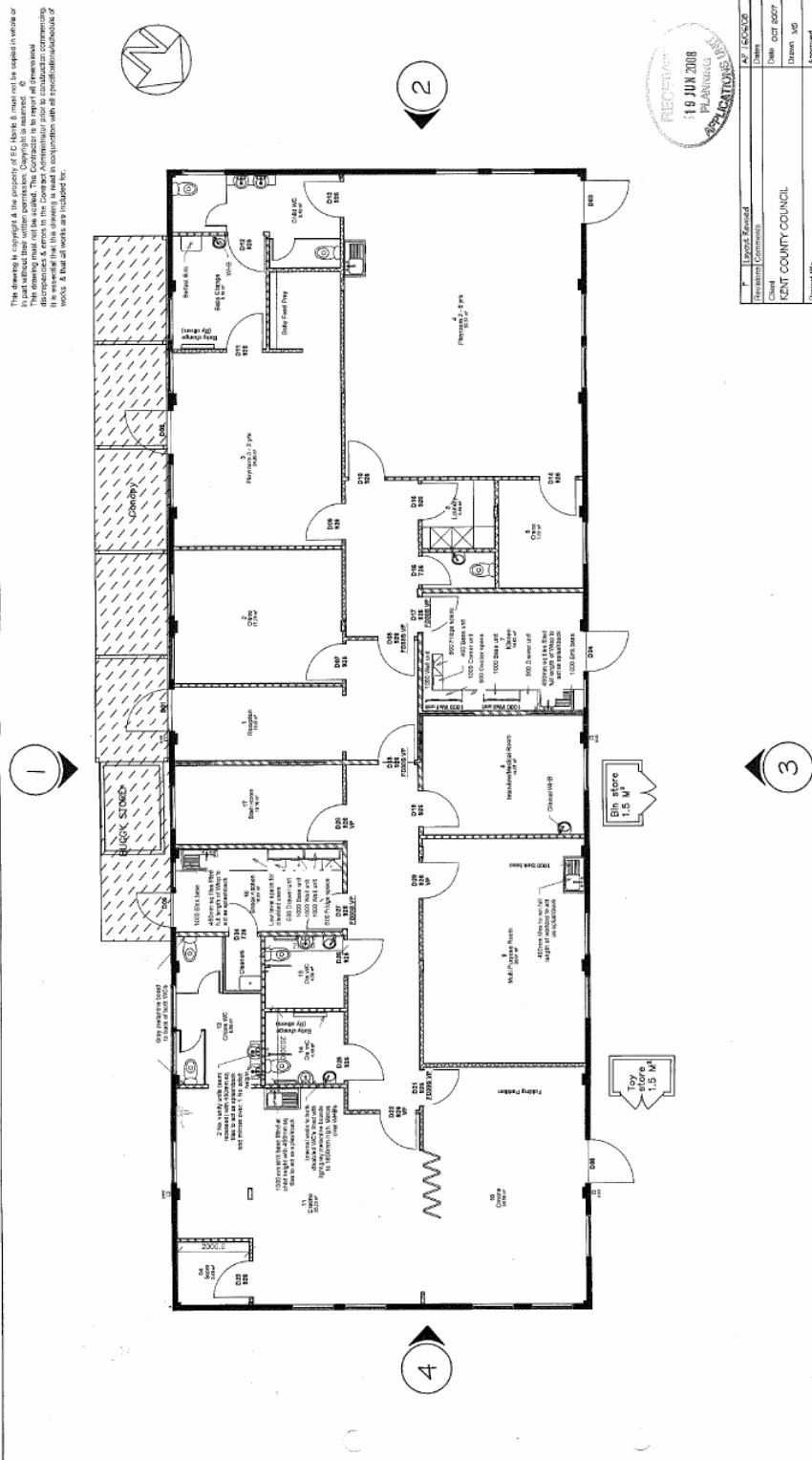
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Project Name	Leysdown
Client	KENT COUNTY COUNCIL
Drawn By	Drawn: JAG
Approved	Approved
Scale	1:100 (AS)
Drawn No.	20080425
Drawn Date	18 JUN 2008



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**P3 Floorplan**  
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5. The application has been made on behalf of the County Council's Children, Families, Health and Education Directorate. The scheme is one of a number of similar applications being proposed across the County as part of Central Government's National Sure Start Programme. 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 toward employment.
6. The aim of the proposed Children's Centre is to offer a range of health, adult education and family support services to the local community. The Centre would operate as an independent community facility providing a range of facilities including nursery care for 0 to 5 year olds. These facilities would include shared use of the space available by midwives, health visitors, social workers, family support workers, Jobcentre Plus and Kent information Service. Outreach services are also anticipated within the Centre's catchment area. The above services would largely be provided through drop-in sessions and other supporting activities like parents groups, play groups and adult education / training. The application states that not all families in the area would visit the Centre every day or even every week.
7. The building proposed would contain a crèche / multi-purpose meeting room for use by families using the Centre as an informal meeting room through to formal seminar style learning. The application also includes a second smaller multi-use room, an interview/ treatment room, staff room, reception, office, kitchen, associated toilet and cloakroom facilities, and two nursery rooms.
8. The application sets out that the proposed opening hours for the Centre would be 0800 to 1800 hours Monday to Friday for 48 weeks of the year. The Centre would employ 10 members of staff on a full time basis; 7 as part of the nursery function and 3 for the Children's Centre with numbers rising for special events. The application sets out that the Children Centre function would generate up to 30 visitors in a typical day, which would generally be spread out across the 10 hours of operation. The Centre would also provide a potential venue for educational events in association with the service, like seminar style training, during these events a number of people may arrive at one time. In support of the Children Centre function, the proposed nursery would accommodate up to 52 children each day in two sessions 26 attending in the morning and 26 in the afternoon.
9. The application includes provision of a new vehicle and separate pedestrian access points onto Warden Bay Road, along with the 12 formal car-parking spaces plus 1 disabled bay. An informal overflow parking area is shown adjacent to the entrance road for approximately 5-6 cars. The applicant states this area would be covered in grass protection mesh as necessary.
10. The application includes 1.8m weldmesh perimeter fencing and additional landscape planting around the site.
11. The application documents received contain a site review of 12 alternative locations that were considered for the proposed development within the surrounding communities. The review gives reasons for the rejection of various sites and demonstrates the process undertaken in identifying the application site.

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**Development Plan Policies**12. (i) The adopted **Kent and Medway Structure Plan** (2006):

- Policy SP1 Seeks to protect and enhance the environment and achieve a sustainable pattern and form of development.
- Policy SS8 Non-residential development in rural locations should demonstrate that a rural location is essential; or seek to reuse existing rural buildings; or provide a public facility for which a rural location is justified.
- Policy EN1 Seeks to protect and conserve and enhance the countryside for its own sake. Development that would adversely affect the countryside will not be permitted unless there is an overriding need for it which outweighs the requirement to protect the countryside.
- Policy EN3 Kent's landscape and wildlife habitats will be protected, conserved and enhanced.
- Policy QL1 Seeks all development to be well designed and of high quality that respond positively to the local character. Development, which would be detrimental to the built environment, amenity, function and character of settlements or the countryside, will not be permitted. Seeks development to consider the needs of the community, provide safe environment, protect residential amenity, and adopt sustainable construction techniques.
- Policy TP3 Local Planning Authorities should ensure that development sites are well served by public transport, walking and cycling.
- Policy TP19 Seeks development proposals to comply with the respective vehicle parking policies and maximum standards adopted by Kent County Council and Medway Council.
- Policy NR1 Seeks development to incorporate sustainable construction techniques and prudent use of natural resources.
- Policy NR5 Seeks to conserve and enhance Kent's environment including visual, ecological, geological, historic and water environments, air quality, noise and light intrusion.

(ii) The adopted **Swale Borough Local Plan** (2008)

- Policy SP5 Development proposals in the countryside should seek to increase local self-sufficiency whilst protecting and where possible, enhancing the character of the wider countryside. Seeks high design standards, to protect the countryside from unnecessary development, and, to permit innovative proposals that provide new services, or increase the

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- viability of existing provision, including proposals for the shared use of buildings.
- Policy SP7 To satisfy the social needs of the Borough's communities development proposals will promote safe environments and a sense of community by increasing social networks by providing new community services and facilities.
- Policy SH1 Development proposals will be supported in accordance with the following defined settlement hierarchy: in the case of local service centres including Leysdown - new development may be acceptable on previously-developed land within the defined built-up areas or, in the case of new services for the settlement and the surrounding rural area, on other suitable sites that do not harm the settlement pattern or character of the surrounding countryside; and in case of minor development settlements, including Bayview and Warden Bay - development will be limited to infill or redevelopment proposals within the defined built-up areas, or, exceptionally, for other development considered essential to meet the needs of the local community that cannot be located elsewhere in accordance with Policy E6. Development proposals should maintain or enhance the character of the village.
- Policy E6 The quality, character and amenity value of the wider countryside of the Borough, which is all the land falling outside the built-up area boundaries will be protected and where possible enhanced. Development proposals will only be permitted when it provides a service that enables existing rural communities to meet their essential needs locally, in accordance with Policy RC2; or it provides for necessary community infrastructure.
- Policy E8 Development on agricultural land will only be permitted when there is an overriding need that cannot be met firstly on land within the built-up area boundaries.
- Policy E9 The quality, character and amenity value of the wider landscape will be protected and, where possible, enhanced. Within the countryside and rural settlements, seeks proposals to be sympathetic to local landscape character and quality; and minimise the adverse impacts of development upon landscape character.
- Policy E19 Seeks development to be of high quality design that responds positively to creating safe, accessible, and attractive places; enriching the qualities of the existing environment by promoting local distinctiveness and strengthening the sense of place; making efficient and prudent use of natural resources; providing native landscaping; appropriate to its context in respect of scale, height and massing; making best use of texture, colour, pattern and durability of materials; and achieving flexibility to respond to future changes in use, lifestyle and demography.



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- Policy E20      Seeks proposals to integrate security and safety measures within their design and layout.
- Policy RC1      Proposals that would help to diversify the rural economy, provide new rural jobs and services, will be permitted provided that: the proposal is appropriate in scale with its locality and the site retains its rural character; there is a positive impact upon, or no detriment to, landscape character, biodiversity or countryside conservation; the use would not result in a significant increase in traffic to the detriment of the character, and would not create unsustainable travel patterns; and maximum use is firstly made of existing buildings, followed by use of other previously developed land, in preference to development on greenfield land, except where this would result in a more acceptable and sustainable development.
- Policy RC2      The Council will grant planning permission for the use of existing buildings to enable rural communities to meet their important needs locally. Where it can be shown that no suitable existing building is available, a new building will be supported on sites within the village confines. In the absence of such sites, development will be permitted on previously developed sites close to the confines of the village, provided that there is no other more sustainably located alternative, and that it is safely accessible to the local community on foot or cycle.
- Policy T1      The Borough Council will not permit development proposals that: generate volumes of traffic in excess of the capacity of the highway network, and/or decrease highway safety; lead to the formation of a new access, or the intensification of any existing access, onto a primary or secondary road or route, unless it can be created in a location that is acceptable to the Borough Council.
- Policy T3      The Borough Council will only permit development if appropriate vehicle parking is provided, in accordance with the adopted Kent County Council parking standards.
- Policy T4      Seeks the needs and safety of cyclists and pedestrians, including the disabled, to be given special attention within any development including cycle parking facilities provided in accordance with Kent County Council cycle parking standards.
- Policy T5      Seeks development proposals to be well located in relation to public transport links.
- Policy C1      The Borough Council will grant planning permission for new or improved community services and facilities.

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**Consultations**

13. **Swale Borough Council** – Members of the Borough Council's Planning Applications Committee raise an objection to the application (as originally submitted). The comments received are as follows:

*"Whilst Members did not raise objection in principle to the scheme they did consider that the proposed building was of a poor design being located in such a prominent position in the countryside at the junction of two main roads, would have a harmful impact on the appearance of the surrounding rural area.*

*However Members did also consider that if the building design was amended to improve its design and relocated further toward the centre of the site together with some meaningful landscape boundary treatment then the Council would find such a scheme much more acceptable."*

Following receipt of the above objection the applicant reconsidered the application and provided an amended proposal in response to the views received. This information has been provided to Swale Borough Council for their further comment and any views received prior to Committee meeting will be reported verbally.

14. **Leysdown Parish Council** – no comment received on writing this report. Any views received prior to the Committee meeting will be reported verbally.
15. **Warden Parish Council** – supports and welcomes the application for the clear benefits that it will bring to the community. The comments note the lack of public parking spaces and the ethos of the programme to encourage walking. The Parish Council note that there are several public parking spaces in close proximity to the site which could be used.

Further comments have been received from Warden Parish Council in response the revised application noting that the proposal is one of the most worth while projects to happen at the eastern end of the Island and it is hoped, by the community, that this project is started at the earliest possible opportunity.

In response to the Borough Councils concerns about the potential detrimental impact of the proposed building on the appearance of the surrounding rural area, Warden Parish Council requests that the County Planning Authority considers the following facts from the local inhabitants:

- *"When travelling along the B2231 from Bayview to Leysdown on the Leysdown Road, from the last brick built building in Bayview up to the junction with Warden Bay Road all inhabited and uninhabited buildings are of light construction.*
- *There is no need to landscape the Children's Centre surroundings, especially with trees, in that it is recommended by crime reduction / prevention officers that where possible ... sites should ensure good natural surveillance.*
- *The conurbation of Warden has 650 children aged between 0-16 years the majority of which are aged between 0-5 years. These figures do not include Leysdown Parish's children. Swale Borough Council is passing numerous development plans for 3 & 4 bedroom family homes in Warden. ... The Eastchurch School cannot cope*

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*with the existing number of children with out having temporary light construction buildings within the school complex.”*

16. **Environment Agency** – no objection and no comment to make on the application.
17. **The Divisional Transportation Manager** – objected to the proposals (as originally made) in respect of highway matters. The initial comments received regarding the application as originally proposed can be summarised as follows:
- Objects to the application on the grounds that the car parking provision is considered to be too low for the likely demands.
  - Notes a draft Travel Plan has been recently submitted;
  - Identifies the relatively remote location and that it is essential that the vehicle parking provision is adequate, as any overspill and inconsiderate parking would have an impact on the network, particularly during peak traffic periods;
  - Notes that the site has the potential to generate a higher proportion of vehicle movements than a site in an urban location.
  - Calculates the proposed use should provide a total of 22 parking spaces, including 1 designated disabled space and 2 spaces of sufficient size but not specifically designated. Of which 11 spaces would be required for the nursery function based on 7 members of staff and the number of nursery places that would be made available. The Children's Centre function would also require 11 spaces based on the permanent office staff, medical room, and maximum capacity of the multi-use spaces proposed within the building.

Following consultation on the revised application layout included within this report the Divisional Transportation Manager comments as set out below.

*“Whilst I have objections to the current proposals in respect of highway matters it may be possible to overcome those objections if the following amendments were made:-*

*Whilst the parking provision has increased, I am still of the opinion that the location and nature of the site require more spaces than is being indicated. Although mention has been made of an overflow facility, its indication on the plan is lacking in detail, and would still fall about 4 spaces short of my previous request. As I have explained previously, my worry is that the demands of both the Childrens Centre and Nursery will overlap, and parents dropping children off at the nursery will choose to park on Warden Bay Road when the car park is full. This will occur during the peak period on a road that is the only route out of Warden, in the vicinity of a complicated junction arrangement, and cause a hazard to all users of the highway.”*

18. **Kent Police Architectural Liaison Officer** – expresses concern that the development as proposed has the potential to increase the risk of crime unless measures are implemented to design out crime. Recommends the use of the Home Office Secured by Design (SBD) award scheme.

The consultee notes that the location has, in the past, been a hotspot for crime and draws attention to the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, which requires each authority to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder. The comments received make a number of recommendations relating to the design of the building, windows, alarms,

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security cameras, landscaping, lighting, car parking, management, and construction phase.

**Publicity and Representations**

19. The application has been publicised by a site notice and the notification of 4 neighbouring properties. No letters of representation have been received.

**Local Member**

20. The Local County Member for Sheppey, Mr A. Crowther, was notified of the application on 31 October 2007.

**Discussion**

21. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) requires that applications are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore, this 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 considering this proposal the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph (12) above are particularly relevant.

22. In my opinion, the main determining issues relate to the following points:

- siting;
- design, layout and appearance;
- highway impacts; and
- security.

**Siting**

23. The application proposes to site the development within a greenfield site beyond the defined boundaries of the local settlements. The location proposed is roughly equidistant from the residential areas of Leysdown, Warden, and Bay View. The site is positioned at the corner of two main access roads to the above settlements and is in a relatively prominent location in the landscape. The land currently forms part of a larger open field. To the north and east of the site the land is designated for holiday villages and is occupied by a large number of static caravans and small chalets. These buildings are primarily occupied on a seasonal basis and do not offer year round accommodation.

24. Whilst the site is not subject to any site-specific designations within the Development Plan, the proposed location is outside the defined limits of the local settlements. The location requires that any proposal development be subject to a number of Development Plan Policies that seek to protect the wider countryside. The broad thrust of these policies presumes against development and seeks to preserve and/or enhance the countryside for its own sake, subject to a limited number of exceptional circumstances.

25. Kent and Medway Structure Plan (KMSP) Policies SS8 and EN1 set out a general presumption against development in the countryside, however allow for proposals, amongst other uses, that provide a public facility for which the rural location is justified.

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Policy EN3 seeks to protect and enhance the countryside character and states that where development in the countryside is justified features and characteristics of the area will be retained.

26. Swale Borough Local Plan Policy SP5 seeks development that increases local self-sufficiency whilst protecting the countryside from unnecessary development, however provides support for the provision of new services. Policy SH1 supports development proposals in accordance with a defined settlement hierarchy that identifies Leysdown as a local service centre and Bay View and Warden Bay as minor settlements. This Policy allows for infill development within the settlement boundaries on previously developed land, however it allows for, in exceptional circumstances, new services that are considered essential to meet local needs and cannot be located elsewhere to be positioned in the countryside, subject to the provisions of Policy E6. Policy E6 seeks to protect the character of the countryside, setting out that development will only be permitted that enables rural communities to meet their essential needs or provides necessary community infrastructure in accordance with Policy RC2. Policy RC2 supports community facilities in rural locations setting out that existing buildings should be used first, and where no suitable alternate exists a new building on previously developed land close to the village confines that is accessible to the local community on foot or cycle. Policies E8 and E9 seek to protect the wider countryside, including farmland, its quality, character and amenity value, seeking proposals that are sympathetic to the landscape character.
27. The application proposes the provision of a community Children Centre that has been specifically targeted at the surrounding communities due to a clearly identified need for the provisions. It is planned to provide similar services in all local communities over time, the application states that this specific location was identified in advance of others due to the benefits the proposed facility would offer the community. The application states that there are 158 children under school age in the three local communities, and that they and their families would benefit from access to the services proposed. I am satisfied that there is an established need for the proposed development across the local communities, and that it would increase local self-sufficiency and provide an important local service. In accordance with the provisions of the Development Plan Policies the applicant has undertaken an assessment of potential sites in the area to try to identify a suitable location within the confines of the existing settlement boundaries, within available existing buildings and previously developed land. However, having considered 12 locations within the wider communities, they considered none were appropriate for the Centre proposed. The application site is considered by the applicant to be the most appropriate and sustainable location for the Centre, being equidistant from the three communities and within a 20 minute walking distance from the three centres. The applicant argues that there are no suitable locations within the settlement areas, and that to position the Centre in one of the three settlements would disadvantage the other communities as the service would be outside of the accepted 20 minute walking distance which would encourage travel by car.
28. I note that the Borough Council has not raised objection to the principle of using the application site for a community Children Centre recommending that it is the design and layout of the development originally proposed that is cause for concern in the rural landscape. I note that since this objection was received the applicant has amended the proposals. The issues of design and layout are considered in further depth below. I am satisfied that the application would enable the local community to meet its local needs

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and that the applicant, in accordance with the appropriate Development Plan Policies, has explored all reasonable options to locate the development within the built up area. In my opinion, this establishes the circumstances that meet the criteria that allow the favourable consideration of a site outside the built confines within the wider countryside. As discussed, the application site is positioned to be within the maximum acceptable walking distance of all three communities it would serve. I also note that the location is positioned adjacent to the furthest extent of the holiday villages permitted in the Warden area and as such would be located adjacent to existing development.

29. Subject further consideration of the design and layout of the development, highways and security below, I consider that, in this instance, the proposed use of the land would be acceptable in the open countryside and is in accordance with the provisions of KMSP Policies SS8, EN1 and EN3, and Local Plan Policies SP5, SH1, E6, E8, E9 and RC2. I therefore do not raise an objection to the location proposed.

Design, layout and appearance

30. Kent and Medway Structure Plan Policy QL1 seeks development in the countryside to be of a high quality that respects the character of the area and takes account of the needs of the community, amongst other matters. Swale Borough Local Plan Policies SP5 and E19 seek development in the countryside to achieve a high quality of design, Policies SP5, SH1, E6, E9 and E19 seek development that respects and/or enhances, the quality, character and amenity value of the wider countryside.
31. Swale Borough Council's Planning Committee raised an objection to the design and layout of the original application drawings received, considering that the proposed building was of poor design, located in a prominent position and would be harmful to the appearance of the surrounding rural area. These views were qualified by Borough Members, who considered that if the building were relocated toward the centre of the site, the design amended to improve the appearance and a meaningful landscape scheme, they would find the scheme more acceptable. Subsequently the applicant reviewed the design and layout of the proposal in the light of comments received from consultees; please see the amended drawings and layout plan included with this report. I note that the revisions to the development put forward by the applicant include an amended site layout that positions the proposed building toward the centre of the application site away from the public highway. The amendments also include an increase in car parking provision, a landscape scheme and minor changes to the design of the building. The changes to the design include revised window arrangements and provision of sand yellow rendered finish in place of the originally proposed willow coloured plasticol panelling. The Borough Council is in the process of reconsidering these details and any views received prior to the Committee Meeting will be reported verbally.
32. The design of the building proposed is similar to a number of applications that the County Planning Authority has considered to date across the county. The application proposes a modular style building that is constructed off site in a quality-controlled environment that enables a swift construction period and ensures the quality of the finish to the building. The application proposes an enhanced construction that includes a rendered finish and cedar cladding that are proposed to break up the uniform structure through the use of a variety of colours and textures. The sections of cedar cladding are shown applied vertically to the corners of the main elevation facing Leysdown Road.

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The timber cladding panels would have an oiled finish and are proposed to oversail the building's roofline by 450mm. This approach would serve to break up the elevation of the building and create a perceived change in the roof height, all adding interest to the design. The building proposed would be guaranteed by the manufacturer to have a minimum life span of 25 years, which is a requirement under the Sure Start Programme. The building proposed would also seek to achieve a reasonable standard of sustainability within its design achieving a minimum Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) rating of GOOD. The amended application also includes retention of existing planting on site and the provision of hedgerows and shrubs to the boundaries of site with the public highway.

33. Given the location, I consider that it would be preferable to seek to enhance the landscape by providing a statement building for the Children's Centre, particularly given the prominent location in the countryside at the junction of two main access roads that serve the local community. However, the applicant has taken the time to consider the views expressed by consultees and officers during the processing of the application before resubmitting the revised details set out in this report. Taking account of the views received to date the applicant has requested that the proposals be formally considered on the basis of the information submitted, being the best solution that they are able to propose at this time. It therefore needs to be considered whether the development as proposed would detract from local amenities, character, landscape or environment.
34. Due to its location at the corner of an open field, the proposed Children's Centre would be unlikely to generate any significant detrimental impacts on the local amenities beyond the traffic that could be generated, which is considered further below. The building is single storey and set back from the public highway, the closest properties are located within the holiday park opposite the site across Warden Bay Road. The scale and massing structure would be appropriate to the surrounding environment and would not result in any significant amenity impacts. The small scale of the development would also help to limit the impact of the proposals within the wider landscape. Whilst positioned on an open site, the centre when viewed from the public highway would, for the most part, be set against a background of various structures within the nearby holiday parks. The setting of the building back from the public highway and enhancements to the landscaping on site would assist in breaking up the structure and reducing its prominence in the landscape.
35. The provision of security fencing, whilst vital in this location, also has the potential to create a visually prominent structure / barrier in the countryside. I note that there are examples of similar fencing in the locality. I also consider that the use of the proposed weldmesh style fencing in this instance would help to maintain the openness of the site. In my opinion, this style of fencing when viewed from a distance appears more transparent and appropriate to a rural location than some other types of security fencing available. I would suggest that should planning permission be granted, a condition be imposed to ensure that the fencing is finished in a suitable dark colour.
36. Taking the above details into consideration, I consider that whilst a permanent structure would be preferable in this location, this needs to be set against the likely impacts of the development as proposed and the need to provide a local service to the surrounding communities. The benefits of the scheme have been established and, whilst the modular design has caused concern, I consider that the changes proposed would assist in softening the building's prominence, and the use of colours and textures proposed would

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help to link the development into the landscape. I consider that the building as proposed would not look out of place and would not have an unacceptable impact on the character of its surroundings. On balance, subject to conditions covering amongst other matters the development to be carried out in accordance with the drawings received and the proposed fencing to be finished in a dark colour, I would not raise a material-planning objection to the application on design grounds.

Highway impacts

37. In order to serve the three communities in the local area the Sure Start Programme requires that the proposed service be positioned within 20 minutes walking distance of potential users so as to discourage the use of the car. This is part of the justification of for the location selected outside the confines of the various settlements. The site is approximately equidistant from the three communities, the furthest being Warden approximately 1km to the north. The Centre would, to some extent, be remote from the communities it would serve with few formal residential properties in the immediate vicinity. The site is connected to pedestrian links in the area and is served by the local bus route, however the site does have the potential to generate vehicle movements. Whilst there are car parking facilities in the surrounding communities, these are not within immediate reach of the site and people are likely to look to park in or near the site. The roads adjacent to the application site provide key access routes to the neighbouring communities and due to the position of the site at the corner of Leysdown Road and Warden Bay Road, yellow lines on the public highway prevent vehicles parking in the immediate surroundings.
38. The application proposes to develop a greenfield site and as such includes a new vehicle access on to the public highway and would introduce a new travel pattern onto the network. The vehicle access includes a pull off area from the public highway and the provision of 12 formal car-parking spaces, a disabled bay and overflow parking adjacent to the access road. The application sets out that up to 6 vehicles would be accommodated in the overflow parking, however the details shown on the drawings received do not clearly demonstrate the arrangements.
39. The Divisional Transportation Manager has indicated that at peak times the area around the application site is extremely busy and any overspill and/or inconsiderate parking would have an impact on the network and highway safety. In his view, due to the remote location of the Centre from the catchment areas it would serve and the nature of the use proposed, the proposals should include 22 car parking spaces, which would be the maximum recommended under the Kent Vehicle Parking Standards. The comments received from Kent Highway Services concerning the amended site layout acknowledge the increase in provision but continue to maintain an objection on grounds of highway safety due to insufficient car parking proposed on-site.
40. I note that the car parking options in the immediate vicinity of the site are limited and therefore I would support the Divisional Transportation Manager's comments on the proposal. I note he has suggested that, subject to clarification of the proposed arrangements and provision of 4 additional spaces on site, to take the provision up to the recommended level, it may be possible to overcome the highway objections.
41. Kent and Medway Structure Plan Policy TP3 seeks development sites that are well served by public transport, walking and cycling. Swale Borough Council Local Plan



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Policies T3 and T4 seeks development that takes account of the needs of cyclists and pedestrians and is well located to public transport links. Whilst the site is relatively distant from any immediate residential properties, its central location in relation to all three communities would make walking and /or cycling a viable option from the whole proposed catchment. The location also has access to the local bus services, and the development would include provision of a buggy store for parents attending the Centre.

42. Taking the above considerations into account, and subject to clarification of the car parking arrangements and the provision of 4 additional spaces on site, I consider that the proposed development would be acceptable in highways terms. I recommend that should permission be granted that conditions be imposed requiring the car parking to be provided prior to first occupation of the building, details of appropriate cycle parking, and the adoption and continued review of a travel plan for the Centre to encourage the use of more sustainable methods of transport.

#### Security

43. I note that comments have been received from the Kent Police Architectural Liaison Officer concerning the proposed Children Centre. The comments highlight that the location has experienced crime problems in the past and that care needs to be taken in designing the scheme to ensure further opportunities for crime do not result from the development. The comments received draw attention to the principles of Secured by Design and the provisions of Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 that places a duty on the authority to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of that function on crime, and the need to do all that is reasonable to prevent crime and disorder. The comments include recommendations relating to the security provisions for the building including perimeter fencing, alarms, security cameras, landscaping, lighting, nature surveillance and management of the site. The recommendations have been made available for the applicant's information. I would consider that a number of the suggestions would primarily relate to how the site is to be managed. I note that one of the main requirements under the Sure Start Programme is the security of the Centre and its users. That is demonstrated by the perimeter and internal fencing proposed as part of the site layout. I am satisfied that the key recommendations that can be controlled under the planning process could be covered by way of appropriately worded conditions.

#### **Conclusion**

44. I consider that the applicant has demonstrated circumstances that would allow the consideration of a new development in the wider countryside. The benefits of providing a community service that would support three local settlements would outweigh any detrimental impacts from developing the proposed location. The building is relatively small and would not result in a substantial impact on the landscape. I note the modular design has caused some concerns, however the applicant has revised the design and layout in response to comments received. Whilst the changes to the design are largely limited to the materials proposed, when considered in the context of the adjacent holiday parks, the amended layout which sets the building back from the highway, and the landscape improvements, I do not consider that the development would be unacceptable in this location. I am satisfied the development is acceptable in highways terms subject to the provision of 4 additional car parking spaces on site and conditions covering provision of the car parking, adoption of a travel plan and provision of cycle parking. Therefore, subject to appropriate conditions including those set out below, I would not

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raise a planning objection and recommend that the application be granted planning permission.

**Recommendation**

45. I RECOMMEND that SUBJECT TO the provision of satisfactory additional car parking on site to meet highway and design requirements PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO the imposition of conditions including:

- the standard time limit;
- the development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
- details of cycle parking;
- details of external lighting;
- details of the canopy;
- security fencing to be weldmesh with a dark colour finish;
- car parking to be provided prior to commencement of use of the Centre;
- the overflow parking area proposed to be protected by grass protection mesh;
- hours of use for the Children’s Centre to be restricted to 0800 to 1800 Monday to Friday;
- the use of the building to be restricted specifically to use as a Children’s Centre only; and
- submission, implementation and ongoing review of a Travel Plan for the Children’s Centre.

Case officer – James Bickle	01622 221068
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Background documents - See section heading
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