

# **PLANNING SUPPORT STATEMENT**

for

**Proposed Alterations to form new  
Children's Centre**

at

**Long Buckby Community Centre,  
41 Station Road, Long Buckby, NN6 7QB**

for

**Northamptonshire County Council**

prepared by

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## **PROPOSED ALTERATIONS TO FORM NEW CHILDREN'S CENTRE, LONG BUCKBY COMMUNITY CENTRE**

### **SUPPORTING STATEMENT**

#### **REASONS FOR DEVELOPMENT:**

##### **National Overview**

Sure Start Children's Centres are key to the Government's Every Child Matters: Change for Children Programme. Children's Centres will be the key to providing families with all the services that they might need. The Government has set the target that by April 2010 there will be a Children's Centre in every community. This will total 3,500 centres nationally.

The Childcare Act 2006, is a key milestone for driving the improvement of services that will reduce inequalities and increase young children's wellbeing. The Act set a requirement on the Local authority to deliver good quality integrated early childhood services, provide outreach and the inclusion and involvement of families. This work will be carried out in partnership with key partners such as the Primary Care Trusts and Job Centre Plus. Every Child Matters (ECM) focuses on the improvement of outcomes for children. Life chances for children are enhanced via making available families' access to additional appropriate services. This has and will continue to be achieved through the development of Northamptonshire Children's Centres.

The National Childcare Strategy links Children's Centres to Extended Services, which continue to provide integrated services to children aged 5 plus and their families, through schools.

##### **Northamptonshire Goals and Targets**

The work being achieved by Children's Centres now and in the future fits into many local strategies and targets:

##### **The Councils corporate outcomes**

Through working with the County Council internal teams and other professionals and agencies, Children's Centres and the services associated with them will contribute towards the 4 corporate Outcomes, these being:

- A safer, freer and stronger communities
- A secure, healthy and independent future for our children, our young people and our adults
- A smaller more enabling council focussed on our customers
- A cleaner, greener and more prosperous County

## The Sustainable Community Strategy for Northamptonshire

This consists of 4 headline aims, these being:

- To be successful through sustainable growth and regeneration
- To develop through having a growing economy with more skilled jobs
- To have safe and strong communities
- To have healthy people who enjoy a good quality of life

Under each of these aforementioned headline aims there are three key principles. Children's Centres can contribute to a minimum of one of these principles under each aim

Within "To be successful through sustainable growth and regeneration" a key principle is to "...improve and preserve buildings.... for future generations" The Children's Centre **build programme** contributes towards this

Within "To develop through having a growing economy with more skilled jobs" 2 key principles are "workers have the right skills to respond to the employment needs of a dynamic economy" and "residents have the opportunity to learn throughout their lives" The delivery of **support by Job Centre plus** and **Family / Adult learning** through Children's Centres will support both of these

Within "To have Safe and Strong Communities" two key principles are "residents have a shared identity and are involved in developing their communities" and "public services meet the needs of residents" Children's Centres will contribute towards the former by **members of the local community being involved in its governance** and the latter by Centres being responsible for identifying and responding to need in the local economy. E.g. if there is a high rate of Reception year obesity, activity such as healthy eating courses would be provided

Within "To have healthy people who enjoy a good quality of life" all three principles will be supported through Children's Centres. In relation to "supporting vulnerable people to help them lead fulfilling lives" Children's Centres are tasked with **prioritising support**, through National Performance Indicators, for certain already defined **excluded** groups. In terms of "helping young people to have the best possible preparation to become adults" the driving ethos behind Children's Centres is to develop **early intervention and preventative services**. In respect to "helping residents to make choices that improve their health and quality of life" Children's Centres will offer easier access to a **variety of health services** such as midwifery and health visitors as well as providing **family and employment support** activity which will enhance quality of life.

## **Northamptonshire Children and Young People's Plan – May 2009**

The Plan identifies the five outcomes associated with Every Child Matters agenda. This agenda was embedded through the Children's Act 2004.

The five outcomes are:

- Be healthy
- Stay Safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

The plan identifies priority outcomes and measures. Children's Centres and the activities / services delivered under its umbrella will play a key part in achieving these. They will also adopt the ethos that runs throughout this plan. In particular they will

- Deliver integrated services through effective partnership working
- Adopt prevention and early Intervention principles
- Be a key delivery element of emerging area based working
- Support the development of the Children and Young peoples workforce
- Respond to identified needs by offering activities that will support communities to support families to support their children to achieve the five outcomes

### **Northamptonshire**

#### **How are we going to achieve this in our County?**

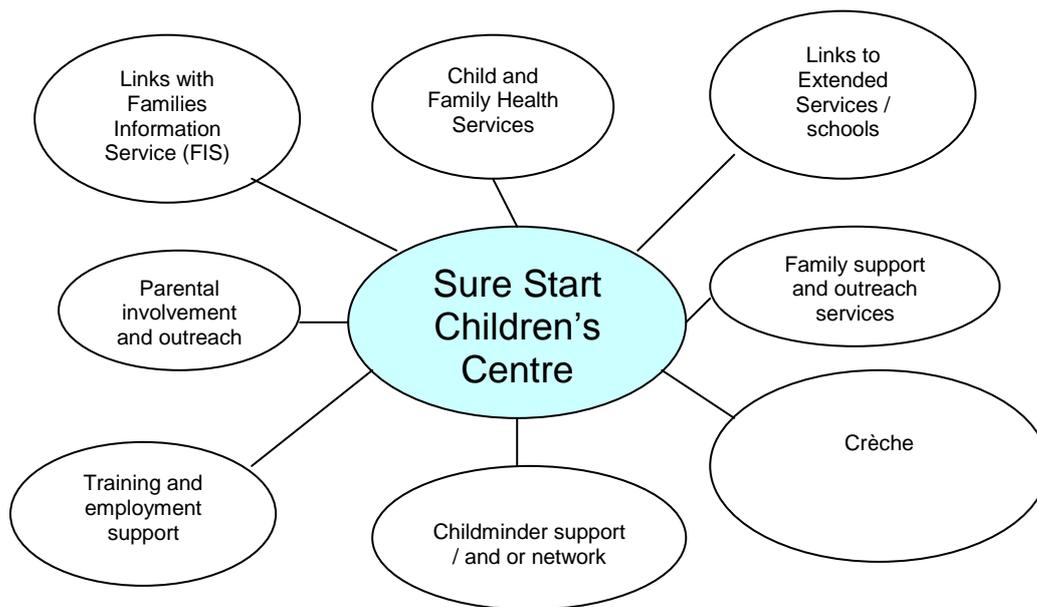
During 2004 – 2008, Northamptonshire have developed Sure Start Children's Centres to become a 'one stop shop', where children 0-5 years old and their families can have access to integrated services and information.

Over the 2008-10 development phase Children's Centres will be more of a "first stop shop", with greater emphasis on outreach provision at different locations. This reflects the roll out of this project into more rural areas.

However the overall vision, to ensure every child gets the best start in life and to give parents more choice about how to balance work and family life is maintained

Each Centre will deliver a carefully planned range of integrated services, responding to locally identified needs. They will work with parents and service providers to deliver inclusive, accessible and child-friendly services that support children and their families, through early intervention at age and stage, to reach their full potential.

Centres will deliver to different degrees, dependant on local need and demand activities and services outlined below



Furthermore additional services to this will be developed should feedback from consultation with the local community show that there is a need, for example baby massage, breastfeeding café or advice on money management.

### **Family support and Outreach Services**

- Visits to parents within two months of birth informing them of how they can access services through Children's Centres
- Access to specialist health and education services
- Drop-in sessions for parents and carers
- Support and information to parents and carers about pre-birth, early days and childcare settings
- Encouragement for parents, especially fathers, to get involved with and support their child's learning and development
- Help and advice on parenting skills

### **Child and Family Health Services**

- Antenatal help, advice and support from Health Visitors and Midwives
- Information and guidance on breast feeding, hygiene, nutrition and safety
- Identification, support and care for mothers suffering from depression before or after birth
- Support with speech and language development
- Help with giving up smoking

## **Links with Families Information Service (FIS)**

- Access through the Families Information Service (FIS) to comprehensive information on all local childcare options, as well as out of school groups and extended services available in schools.
- Information will also be available on local opportunities for family learning, sport and leisure, and community groups as well as signposting to national services for children and families.

## **Support for Training and Employment**

- Access will be available to Jobcentre Plus in addition to local education and training providers.

## **EXISTING SITE AND PROPOSALS:**

The site upon which the new Children's Centre is proposed, is owned by Long Buckby Parish Council and forms part of the existing Long Buckby Community Centre. The site is at present occupied by the Community Centre, fronting Station Road and with residential properties to one side and the rear with a public footpath to the remaining boundary.

To create the new Children's centre it is proposed to carry out internal alterations to a Small Hall on the existing ground floor and by dividing this room with partitions to create a separate Reception, Office and Meeting Room for the Children's Centre. By further alterations and refurbishment it is also planned to create separate Storage and Tea Room facilities for the new Children's Centre. The existing main entrance, via an external courtyard from Station road will be shared with the Community centre users and the existing toilets will be refurbished and shared. It is also proposed to carry out improvements to an existing external yard, accessed off the Main Hall, to form an external play area, including the installation of a retractable canopy which will cover part of the area, to allow outside play in wet weather and provide shade in the summer months. The existing yard is located adjacent to a residential property (lived in by the present Community Centre Caretaker) but the boundary is formed by a two storey gable end, an end gable of a rear lean-to, both with no windows and a two metre high fence behind, so the few times the external play area is used, by the small numbers of children using the Children's Centre, should not greatly affect the residents.

## **Design Approach:**

The design approach to the project has been carefully considered in order to minimise the impact of the new use of the Children's Centre use within the existing Community Centre building and within the context of the local surroundings, whilst providing for the specific needs of the Children's Centre (refer to Design & Access Statement). A large emphasis has been placed upon the creation of a "welcoming" environment.

An imperative design requirement is that the Children's Centre areas can be used and secured off separately when the other areas of the Community Centre is not in use.

All relevant Disability Discrimination Act legislation has been taken account of during the design process within the areas affected by the construction works. The existing main entrance, already installed to allow easy access for wheelchair users, will be retained unaltered and shared with the new Children's Centre.

**Staffing Implications:**

The creation of the Children's Centre will result in the employment of 1no. full time staff and 2no. part time staff, who will use the site intermittently. As indicated previously these employees time are likely to be spent delivering outreach activity at other community buildings

**Statement of Community Involvement/Pre-Application Publicity:**

A number of meetings have been held with the Trustees of the Community Centre during the design process and the Trustees have expressed their support for the creation of the new Children's Centre within the existing Community Centre. In addition information has been placed in the newsletter Buckby Buzz which goes to every house in the village. A public consultation event on the building plans took place in the Library on 19<sup>th</sup> February.

As this site is developing the lead body delivering the service will have the responsibility to ensure consultation with the local residents in their community. Evaluations will be drawn up from the results and plans will be made.

**Demolitions:**

The proposals will not involve the demolition of any existing buildings or parts of the existing Community Centre.

**Trees to be felled:**

The proposals do not involve the felling or removal of any existing trees or other planting.

**Flood Risk Assessment:**

Not applicable.

**Land Contaminants:**

Not applicable.

### **Vehicle Access and Car Parking:**

Vehicle access to the site is directly off Station Road into the existing parking spaces and restricted access to the sides of the building, one via a covered way (under the first floor over), into the courtyard containing the main entrance to the building.

This access off Station Road, together with the existing parking facilities, will remain unaltered and used by the new Children's Centre as well as the Community Centre users.

There are 6no. marked out parking spaces to the front of the site, however the majority of users and visitors to the Community Centre use the public car park in Station Road (outside the rugby ground), located a short distance along the road or further parking available in nearby Market Square or along Station Road itself

However it is also worth noting that the new Children's Centre will be "open" predominantly during the day on weekdays, while the majority of the Community Centre use will take place during evenings and weekends.

Also, due to the "reach area" for this Children's Centre and the requirement to develop and deliver outreach activity, it is expected that staff working in the new Children's Centre will be using the car parking intermittently. Activities will be organised by the service providers, which will take place in the rural outreach areas. The rooms available in the new Children's Centre will be used by local Long Buckby community families, who will arrive at the centre on foot.

Access on foot will be encouraged to both the new Children's Centre and the Community Centre facilities, by the creation of an external buggy store.

### **Site access during construction period:**

Construction access to the site will be via the covered way off Station Road but deliveries will be strictly programmed to suit any other use of the building.

### **Services implications:**

The existing mains services to and within the Community Centre building will be retained, altered and extended to suit the new requirements of the Children's Centre. No new mains services are required.

## **PROPOSED ALTERATIONS TO FORM NEW CHILDREN'S CENTRE, LONG BUCKBY COMMUNITY CENTRE**

### **DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT**

This statement should be read in conjunction with the associated building plans and elevations depicting detailed elements.

#### **Assessment**

- Physical – With the Children's Centre, one of the main priorities of the design and initial assessment of the site was to provide a "welcoming" environment for the children and parents, improving access and trying to create a family environment as far as possible. It is seen as essential to encourage persons from their homes into the local community and the design of the new Children's Centre facilities and the improvements to the existing entrance and external areas will hopefully assist with this.
- Social - This Children's Centre will offer a universal provision to all children aged 0-5 years and their families, by means of outreach activities, which will take place in their local rural area. This location in Long Buckby will provide a central office and information point, as well as space for local groups, such as the local Childminding Network, to meet. To meet the core offer of a Children's Centre the service provider will be working in partnership with agencies and organisations from the public, private and third sector. As indicated, the Centre will also provide out reach work and we envisage families attending for small group work or appointments to meet with, for example the Speech and Language Therapist or Job Centre Plus.
- Economic – in line with the above, the development will have a positive economic impact on the area, as well as providing employment opportunities relating to the works associated with the alterations of the existing building.
- Planning policy – this development also supports the planning policy of development of brown field sites for new construction works.

#### **Involvement**

As the new Children's Centre is developing on site, the lead body delivering the services will have the responsibility to ensure consultation with the local residents in their community .

## Evaluation

In the evaluation process, a number of elements had to be incorporated into the detailed design process, outlined below:-

## Design

- Use – As a Children’s Centre, with separate Reception, Office, Meeting Room, Storage and Tea Room, within an existing Community Centre with shared use spaces including entrance, lobby and toilet provision. The design separates the Children’s Centre spaces by a lockable door/screen division off the existing lobby/entrance.
- Amount – The new Children’s Centre accommodation makes use of 55m<sup>2</sup> of the ground floor of the existing Community Centre building, by the alteration and refurbishment of an existing Small Hall, as well as the shared use of existing toilet facilities. The proposals do not include any extension or increase in the floor area of the existing building. Externally, improvements are proposed to the courtyard entrance area, with the inclusion of a covered buggy store and to an existing yard off the Main Hall to provide a secure external play area, including a fully retractable canopy/awning.
- Layout – The rooms to the new Children’s Centre are arranged off a new Reception Area, accessed off the existing lobby/entrance area. The shared toilet facilities are directly outside the Reception, off the existing lobby/entrance area. The new covered buggy store is located in the courtyard, adjacent to the existing main entrance and the only other external space (the yard off the Main Hall) will form a secure play area.
- Scale - The Children’s Centre facilities have been kept to a minimum required to avoid any further extension or loss of existing space to the Community Centre and the proposed use of the existing external areas also do not reduce either the size or use of these areas.
- Landscaping – By the use of a number of raised planters to the existing external areas the proposals hope to improve and “soften up” the entrance courtyard and the concrete yard off the Main Hall. The concrete surface of this yard will also be removed and replaced with a more friendly tarmac and grassed area, with a stepping stone footpath forming the external play area. There will also be additional screen planting along the fence between the play area and Station Road.

- Appearance – The only alteration to the existing building appearance will be the reduction of an existing large window for a smaller one located in the new Children’s Centre over looking the entrance courtyard. The improvements to the entrance courtyard and the yard to the other side of the building, will not affect the appearance of the building from Station Road and the inclusion of the additional planters and planting screen will actually improve the appearance of both these outside areas, in particular the existing concrete yard.

## **Access**

The property design takes account of:-

- Approach – The design of the new Children Centre facilities and the improvements to the external entrance courtyard sensitively reflects the need to create a welcoming environment for the visitors to the Children’s Centre but also produces a design which compliments both the existing Community Centre building and the overall community ethos.
- Parking - The design has taken into account the needs of retaining the restricted on site parking, together with the additional requirements of the Children’s Centre and the retention of the existing provision of disabled parking facilities.
- Entrance - Within the limits of the site and the existing building, the entrance to the new Children’s Centre has been positioned to create ease of access from the existing entrance, the car parking area and pedestrian access from Station Road, whilst maintaining and improving an aesthetically pleasing appearance.
- Horizontal and Vertical circulation – The horizontal circulation within the Children’s Centre and the existing building has been carefully planned to allow full access to all rooms and external areas. Vertical circulation to the existing first floor is not applicable as the Children’s Centre will not be using any of the existing first floor rooms.
- Access to all services – Internally the new Children’s Centre facilities have been carefully laid-out to maximise use and management. All facilities take account of the security of the employees yet still ensures the provision of an appropriate, friendly and welcoming environment.
- Emergency Egress/Alarm Systems and Evacuation Planning – New fully automatic fire and intruder alarms will be fitted into the completed Children’s Centre facility and Fire Risk Assessments will be in place on occupation.

**Philosophy and Approach:**

The new Children's Centre facility has been specifically designed to enable ease of access for people with disability. Access to and internal travel routes within the altered areas and the existing building have been carefully planned to provide ease of access for visitors and can make use of essential facilities. The design of the property is considered to meet the spirit of the Disability Discrimination Act as well as meeting other regulatory and statutory requirements.

**Sources of advice and consultation:**

- Planning advice from Daventry District Council.
- Full consultation with Northamptonshire County Council and the Trustees of Long Buckby Community Centre to ensure the design of the property meets the needs of the end user.
- Advice from a range of professional groups and bodies – particularly around disabled access and compliance with Building Regulations. During the design process key structural, mechanical/electrical and access professional advice has been sought to ensure the Children's Centre operates as efficiently as possible.

**Nature and impact of environmental constraints:**

No apparent environmental constraints identified.

**Proposed solutions for overcoming identified constraints:**

N/A

**What steps have been taken to ensure this information is made available to building occupiers:**

Refer above. Numerous meetings have been held with Trustees of the Community Centre to discuss and agree details of proposed Children's Centre and all key building occupiers have been regularly consulted with and are part of the overall design team. Information has been disseminated to all interested parties for comment and direction on a regularly basis.