

**DELEGATED**

**AGENDA NO.**

**REPORT TO PLANNING COMMITTEE**

**DATE: 10<sup>th</sup> MAY 2006**

**REPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR,  
DEVELOPMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD  
SERVICES**

**06/0486/LA**

**PARKSIDE CENTRE, MELROSE AVENUE, BILLINGHAM**

**ERECTION OF 2M HIGH GALVANISED STEEL SOLID ROUND BAR FENCE WITH  
ROUNDED HEADS POWDER COATED IN DARK GREEN COLOUR**

**Expiry date: 14<sup>th</sup> April 2006**

#### **SUMMARY**

This application was deferred at the Planning Committee meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2006 to enable Members to visit the site.

This application is for the erection of a 2 metre high galvanised steel solid round bar fence with rounded heads, powder coated in dark green colour on the boundary at the Parkside Centre, Melrose Avenue Billingham.

The application has generated 12 letters of objection from the occupants of neighbouring properties and Councillor Woodhouse has also objected.

It is considered that the proposal is necessary to stop the acts of vandalism and misuse of council property and the style of the fence is considered acceptable

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

***Recommended that Planning application 06/0486/LA be Approved subject to the following conditions:***

***01. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plan(s); unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.***

***Drawing Numbers: SBC001, DRWG001, DRWG002***

***Reason: To define the consent.***

***02. All access gates shall open inwards and not onto the Highway***

***Reason: In the interests of Highway Safety***

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Site Description**

The application site is a Children's, Education and Social Care Building located on Melrose Avenue in Billingham. The site currently has a boundary of sporadic fencing and a hedge of approximately 1 metre high along the northern, eastern and western elevations. Access to the site is gained from two points, Melrose Avenue and Skipton Road. Trees are placed intermittently along the boundary. There is a large green area and a car park for 18 cars within the curtilage of the property to the north of the building. Numbers 9 to 15 Melrose Avenue lies to the north of the application site. The properties are approximately 8m away and face directly onto the application site. To the east of the boundary lies residential properties on Melrose Avenue and to the west of the application site lies residential properties on Skipton Road and Corfe Crescent.

### **Proposal**

Planning consent is sought for the erection of a 2m high galvanised steel solid round bar fence with rounded heads, powder coated in dark green colour. Double gates will be placed at the entrance to the car park from Melrose Avenue and the pair of double gates and single gate on the western elevation that previously provided access onto Skipton Road will be replaced by fencing panels to prevent unauthorised access through the premises. In a letter of support from the applicant it was stated that at present the site suffers from regular vandalism and is often used as a tipping area for rubbish and unwanted furniture. The local residents use the main car park as a 'through route' footpath daily, and occasionally a workshop for car/van maintenance or storage at the weekend. The staff of the centre are also concerned about the foot traffic in the car park and believe it is only a matter of time before there is an accident. It is considered that this fence will reduce the incidents of vandalism on the site and improve security, which will benefit the whole community.

## **CONSULTATIONS**

### **Councillor Woodhouse**

- This fence would not be in keeping with the street scene of the area
- Will be visually intrusive to residents to the detriment of the Environment
- Should not be needed as this is a Health and Social Care centre not a school yard
- Adequate boundary separation can be achieved with a lower, less obtrusive structure or hedging of a suitable form
- The design would give the impression of a "secure/detention" facility due to the prison bar nature of the palings
- I cannot therefore support this proposal in its current form

### **Head of Transport and Engineering**

I have no adverse comment to make regarding this application subject to the gates not opening out onto the highway as indicated for 'Entrance 2'.

### **Neighbour consultation**

The consultation period for the original proposal expired on the 13<sup>th</sup> March 2006 but neighbours were reconsulted for a further 21 days due to an administration error.

A total of 12 letters of objection were received from the following properties and a petition signed by 7 residents were received. The objection letters were received from;

- 7, 11, 60, 64, 15, 56, 62, 13, 17, 68 Melrose Avenue
- 18 Quenby Road

The main reasons for the objections are outlined below.

- The fence will be visually intrusive
- The design would give the impression of a prison environment
- Access to the property for the Fire Brigade is already limited and this fence could put residents lives at greater risk
- It will deprive the area of green space
- Loss of property value
- Loss of light
- Maintenance of the existing hedge will be restricted
- Fence is not needed due to so little vandalism

A Williams

60 Melrose Avenue, Billingham

The 2m high fence would be a total eyesore

June Milner

7 Melrose Avenue, Billingham

A fence of this nature will make the centre look like a prison. It will have an adverse impact on the value on my property. I have been lead to believe that the purpose of this application is to allow the change of use of this building to a young offenders institute.

Doris and Robert Cole

11 Melrose Avenue, Billingham

The placing of the fence will be approximately 7 metres from our lounge window, this combined with the existing trees situation outside our property will reduce even more of the natural light. The erection of a fence will create a prison environment and will deprive us from looking out over the green area. Access to the property for the Fire Brigade is already extremely limited and this fence could put our lives at even greater risk. The erection of the fence would create a trap for litter and dead leaves. It is unsatisfactory from a domestic point of view and also creates a hazard during wet and frosty conditions.

Maureen and Jack Taylor

64 Melrose Avenue, Billingham

Object on the following grounds;

It will create an unnecessary eyesore, it will be contrary to Stockton Council's policy of "Greening" the Borough and it will deprive the area of an open area where the local people can watch over the existing privet hedge and trees as the seasons change. The local residents keep an eye on Parkside. There has been very little vandalism and the area is secured. The outlook from the front windows of these houses will face directly onto the proposed fence. Furthermore in the dark winter months we believe there will be

a potential hazard to the people who use the unlit footpath. The fence would damage the character of the area.

Michelle L Chesney and Lee Summerson

15 Melrose Avenue, Billingham

It will be 5m from my front door and will feel like a prison. It will reduce the value of the property and hinder the potential for sale. It will hinder access for emergency vehicles. The fence is too big, ugly and unsightly and would not benefit the local residents.

Wilkinson

56 Melrose Avenue, Billingham

We feel that the fence will have a detrimental effect on the area. Something more environmental and visually friendly should be considered. It will ruin the view from my home and will be like looking onto a prison yard.

Owner/Occupier

62 Melrose Avenue, Billingham

It will ruin the pleasant outlook from their property. There is very little disturbance around Parkside so we can see no need for an ugly fence to spoil things.

Mr and Mrs J R Morris

13 Melrose Avenue, Billingham

The fence will be situated approximately 7m from the lounge window and will result in a loss of natural light. Access by emergency vehicles would be impossible. Maintenance to the existing hedge will be restricted. Lack of lighting along the pathway would become a serious problem. The view of the fence would have a detrimental effect on the quality of life. If permission was granted it would adversely affect the value of my home. Fence should be positioned around the car park thus creating a green area.

Guba

17 Melrose Avenue, Billingham

I believe that such a fence will drastically reduce the value of my property. Due to the lack of lighting in the area I believe that the fence will aid the malcontents to create chaos in this area.

S and G Smith

68 Melrose Avenue, Billingham

The 2m high fence would be an eyesore. The fence is not required as there has been little vandalism.

S Devlin and Petitioners

18 Quenby Road, Billingham

We feel that the fence will have a detrimental effect on the area. Something more environmental and visually friendly should be considered.

## **PLANNING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

Policies GP1 of the adopted Stockton on Tees Local Plan is relevant to this application.

## **Policy GP1**

Proposals for development will be assessed in relation to the policies of the Cleveland Structure Plan and the following criteria as appropriate:

- (i) The external appearance of the development and its relationship with the surrounding area;
- (ii) The effect on the amenities of the occupiers of nearby properties;
- (iii) The provision of satisfactory access and parking arrangements;
- (iv) The contribution of existing trees and landscape features;
- (v) The need for a high standard of landscaping;
- (vi) The desire to reduce opportunities for crime;
- (vii) The intention to make development as accessible as possible to everyone;
- (viii) The quality, character and sensitivity of existing landscapes and buildings;
- (ix) The effect upon wildlife habitats;
- (x) The effect upon the public rights of way network.

## **MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

The main considerations of this planning application are the visual effect on the property and street scene and the impact upon the amenity of neighbouring residents.

The fence to be used in this application will have solid vertical bar railings. Stockton on Tees Borough Councils Security Fence Assessment (2004) states that this style of fence has the advantages of a good aesthetic appearance and is durable when correctly installed. It states that it can be used on schools, parks, recreation areas, urban housing, along with traditional, commercial and prestigious locations. The security fence assessment does not list any disadvantages of this style fence.

In a letter of support from the applicant it was stated that at present the site suffers from regular vandalism and is often used as a tipping area for rubbish and unwanted furniture. The local residents use the main car park as a 'through route' footpath daily and occasionally a workshop for car/van maintenance or storage at the weekend. The staff of the centre are also concerned about the foot traffic in the car park and believe it is only a matter of time before there is an accident as residents continually use the site as an access to and from Melrose Avenue. It is considered by the applicant that this fence will reduce the incidents of vandalism on the site and improve security, which will benefit the local residents.

A further letter of support was received from the applicant on the 19<sup>th</sup> April 2006. It stated that the fence is vital to the Parkside Centre as in the near future the applicant hopes to commence work on updating the mental health service offered in the Parkside Centre. He has reiterated that there is a significant problem with vandalism and the fence is needed to stop this. An email of support was also received from Mike Metcalf, a Principle Building Surveyor in the Property Development Department on the 26<sup>th</sup> April 2006. In the email he states that the proposed fencing is a type considered appropriate at a previous committee, they are regular instances of broken glass and debris within the site affecting the ambulant and vehicular access with respect to the client service delivery, he reiterated the point made about vandalism creating problems to the delivery of the service and he states that according to Police Secure By Design, the provision of fencing tends to address these issues, lowering the risks and improving the environment, not only for the premises but for also for the neighbours. This has been proven at other sites within the Borough where similar fencing schemes have been carried out.

At its closest point the fence will be approximately 8m away from the nearest residential properties, 9 – 15 Melrose Avenue and approximately 22m away from the properties to East of the application site and 18m from the properties to the west of the application site on Skipton Road. It is not considered that the fence will be visually obtrusive or will give the impression of a prison environment as it accords with the guidelines laid out in the Security Fence Assessment and the view will be softened by the boundary hedge and the trees on the boundary. This is the recommended fence design in the Stockton Borough and very similar schemes have been approved recently.

With regards to the access for the Fire Brigade it is considered that this fence will not impede emergency response time, as it will be placed behind the existing hedge. In response to the objections on loss of green space, the land is not currently allocated as open green space and is private council owned land that should not be used as recreational space. The fence will help to demarcate the boundary and stop trespassing. Objections have been received on the grounds of loss of light but as the fence is only 2m high and is of a solid round bar construction with gaps of 8cm between the bars it is considered that this will not restrict the amount of light into the properties.

Many of the objections were on the grounds of loss of value to their property but as this is not a material planning consideration this cannot be taken into account when determining this application.

With regards to the potential problems for the maintenance this is not an issue as the boundary hedges are owned by the residents of the adjacent properties. The existing trees and hedging will be retained so will soften the appearance of the fence. The design and size of the proposed fence is supported by the Stockton on Tees Borough Council Security Fence Assessment (2004).

## **CONCLUSION**

It is considered that the proposal is necessary to stop the acts of vandalism and misuse of council property and the style of the fence is considered acceptable by the Stockton on Tees Borough Council's Security Fence Assessment (2004).

For the reasons detailed above, this application is recommended for approval with the conditions stated above.

**Director of Development and Neighbourhood Services**

**Contact Officer: David Gibson– Telephone 01642 526057**

**Financial Implications**

As report.

**Environmental Implications**

As Report

**Community Safety Implications**

N/A

**Human Rights Implications**

The provisions of the European Convention of Human Rights 1950 have been taken into account in the preparation of this report.

**Background Papers**

Stockton-on-Tees Adopted Local Plan (1997)

Stockton on Tees Borough Council Security Fence Assessment (2004)

**Ward and Ward Councillors**

Ward                      Billingham Central

Ward Councillor      Councillor N. Teasdale

Ward Councillor      Councillor B Woodhouse