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Your ref: 3/2024/0799
Our ref: 3/2024/0780/HDC/KW
Date: 27 January 2025

Location: Unit 16 Baublock Blackburn Road Simonstone BB12 7FS
Proposal: Retrospective application for change of use from use class E(g) offices to class E(d) gym and extension of opening hours to 24 hours Monday Sunday inclusive.
Grid Ref: 377864 433469

Dear Kathryn Hughes

With regard to your consultation letter dated 12 November 2024, I have the following comments to make based on all the information provided by the applicant to date.

Summary

Lancashire County Council acting as the Local Highway Authority raises concerns over the proposed development due to its lack of off-street parking provisions.

Advice to Local Planning Authority

Introduction

The Local Highway Authority (LHA) are in receipt of a retrospective application for the change of use from use class E(g) offices to class E(d) gym and extension of opening hours to 24 hours Monday Sunday inclusive at Unit 16 Baublock Blackburn Road Simonstone BB12 7FS.

The LHA is aware of the previous application for the site which was approved on 11 January 2021 under planning application 3/2020/0990 for the proposed construction of four business units on land adjacent to existing business units (ref 3/2017/0284).

The LHA previously responded to the application on 3 December 2024 requiring further information on how the business operates. This letter addresses the further information which has been provided to date.

Site Access

The proposal will utilise an existing access from Blackburn Road, which is a A classified road subject to a 40mph speed limit. The LHA understands that the site access has been approved under planning application 3/2020/0990.

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Internal Layout

The LHA has reviewed drawing number 24.174.00-CDP-00-DR-A-1002, Revision P02, and are aware that the unit will be served by 3 off street parking spaces and 1 disabled parking space. The LHA would expect that a class E(d) has 1:20 car parking provisions for the internal dimensions. An amended internal floor plan has been provided by the applicant, drawing 24.174.00-CDP-ZZ-DR-A-2001, revisions P01 which shows the gyms internal layout space is approximately 331.26 SqM. Taking into consideration the internal gym floor space the site should have a total of 17 off street parking spaces. As a result, the site currently has a shortfall of 13 off street parking spaces.

The LHA is concerned that the proposal has inadequate parking provisions. An on-site visit found that inconsiderate and obstructive parking is taking place within the site and on the surrounding business park, which is resulting in obstructed footpaths. Clients of the business were also noted parking inappropriately within the wider site outside of designated parking bays. As the site is within a business park the internal private road is expected to receive regular service vehicles and therefore the internal private road should remain clear to allow free two-way movement to take place as well as clear pedestrian passage.

The unit is currently in breach of a condition (Condition 4) agreed under planning application 3/2020/0990 which restricts the use of the unit to only be used for the purposes of business use class E(g) or B8 and for no other purpose, including any other purpose within Use Class E.

By limiting the site to a certain use within Class E, the planning authority can better manage the impact on the local community and infrastructure. This aligns with planning principles that aim to maintain the character of an area, ensure the efficient use of the road network, and provide adequate facilities for servicing and parking.

Operating statement

The applicant has provided an operating statement for the business which details there are 3 Personal Trainers who work on a rota basis, however the application form states that the site employs 6 members of staff. Whilst no further information has been provided on this, given the times the Personal Trainers are on site there is likely some crossover of staff within the site which adds additional pressure to the off-street parking provisions given that initially the applicant stated 6 members of staff.

The applicant has provided further information that states that *'the maximum number of people in attendance at a time varies on a day-to day basis however, including staff and clients, the highest number of people in attendance has been recorded as 5-6 people. It is also important to emphasise that people from the neighbouring units walk to the vicinity on their breaks, so parking is never compromised.'* However, an onsite visit found that there was a larger number of attendees on the site which did compromise parking provisions.

The applicant claims that they do have an attendance system however during a site visit it has shown to be ineffective in controlling the number of people who attend the site at any one time.

Whilst the applicant states that *'with the 24 hour opening hours, there will be no parking limitations given that the customers go at staggered hours throughout the day'*. The LHA is of the view that gyms have peak visiting times, this opinion comes from assessments of other gyms in Lancashire, supported by operational statement information, on-site observations and TRICs data with visits appearing to be scheduled before and after normal office hours for the majority.

Therefore, the LHA does have concerns that even with extended opening hours, the proposal will see a similar peak that is experienced elsewhere and on-site observations found that currently, the existing off-street parking provisions are inadequate and parking is taking place elsewhere within the business park.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the critical shortfall of 13 off-street parking spaces is a primary concern, creating potential safety risks within the internal business park. Inadequate parking provisions have already led to inconsiderate and obstructive parking within the site and the surrounding business park, obstructing footpaths, and may hinder the regular flow of service vehicles for other businesses within the site.

The current operations reveal inefficiencies, like the likelihood of overlapping shift patterns, which further strain the inadequate parking resources. Despite claims of staggered customer attendance, peak periods typical to gyms, evidenced by data and on-site assessments, exacerbate the parking issues. Mitigating such issues is unlikely due to the lack of additional outside space and ownership boundaries. Therefore the LHA must continue to outline their concerns with the application to change the use class to E(d) and extending the opening times as the LHA is of the opinion this would not reduce the parking demand significantly.

The current agreement under planning application 3/2020/0990 which restricts the use of the unit to only be used for the purposes of business use class E(g) or B8 and for no other purpose, including any other purpose within Use Class E is more appropriate for the site in terms of parking provisions than the current application.

Yours sincerely

Kate Walsh

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