

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development

Planning Committee: 6 March 2012

DC11/260: Change of Use from Industrial Unit to Class 10 Pre-School Nursery at Unit 6, The Alpha Centre, South Douglas Street, Clydebank by Burns Design Associates.

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1** This application relates to an industrial property in which the Council has an ownership interest. Under the terms of the approved scheme of delegation it therefore requires to be determined by the Planning Committee.

2. DEVELOPMENT DETAILS

- 2.1** The application property is an existing industrial unit situated within an established industrial estate known as the Alpha Centre, off South Douglas Street, Clydebank. The unit has a floor area of 600m² and is presently vacant. It is surrounded by similar industrial units except to the west, where there are flatted properties and the new Clydebank College, and to the south where the unit adjoins Rothesay Dock. There are a variety of businesses operating within the industrial estate, including a roofing contractor, recycling centre, and a bus and coach parts supplier. In addition to the application property there is one other vacant industrial unit. Immediately to the south of the site is the southern end of Cart Street, which opens out into an area used informally for parking and provides access into the industrial land at Rothesay Dock.
- 2.2** Planning permission is sought for the change of use of the unit into a pre-school nursery which will provide 104 spaces for children aged 0-5 years. It is proposed that the unit would employ 25-30 full time staff and potentially some additional part time staff, and would operate from 7.30am-6pm, Monday to Friday. Sixteen existing car parking spaces would be available at the existing front of the property (within the Alpha Centre) for the use of staff, but all access for children/parents will be from Cart Street. A new entrance door would be formed at the rear of the building, and the existing footpath on Cart Street would be extended slightly to provide a link to the new entrance. Although a dropping off/picking up area on Cart Street is shown on the plans, this would be on an adopted road and therefore it could not be provided, so there would be no dedicated drop off parking area. An external play area is proposed on a piece of open land to the west (rear) of the building. It is understood that the application has been submitted on behalf of Sunflower Nurseries, who are seeking the premises as an additional location to cope with high demand for nursery/childcare facilities in Clydebank.

2.3 An application for a similar change of use of the application property was refused by the Planning Committee on 2 June 2009 (decision DC08/367). That application differed from the current proposal primarily in that it did not involve any access from Cart Street. It was refused for the following reasons:

1. *The proposed use is contrary to Policies LE1 and GD1 of the Clydebank Local Plan and the West Dunbartonshire Local Plan Finalised Draft as the proposed use would have an adverse impact on both existing and any future industrial development in the immediate area. The use of the building as a pre-school nursery is not considered an appropriate use for this building in this location.*
2. *The proposed use fails to comply with the requirements of Policies LE1 and GD1 of the Clydebank Local Plan and the West Dunbartonshire Local Plan Finalised Draft in that it does not provide adequate parking provision and pedestrian access facilities which would have a detrimental impact on vehicular and pedestrian safety using the childcare facility and also the users of the industrial estate.*

3. CONSULTATIONS

- 3.1** West Dunbartonshire Council Estates and Economic Development Services each object to the proposal on the basis that it would be an unsuitable use for this industrial location and would result in the loss of an industrial unit.
- 3.2** West Dunbartonshire Council Roads Service indicates that staff parking is adequate and subject to the proposed alteration to the existing footway the pedestrian access from Cart Street would also be acceptable. However, there would be no drop-off/pick up parking provision, and this would take place on an industrial access road (the end of Cart Street), which is already very busy with parked cars for the college and surrounding businesses. Whilst the Roads Development Guide does not specifically require off street drop-off/pick-up parking for nursery uses, the dropping off and picking up of young children on an industrial access road is not considered appropriate and the Roads Service does not support the application.
- 3.3** West Dunbartonshire Council Environmental Health Service has no objection subject to conditions relating to contaminated land being imposed should the proposal be approved.
- 3.4** Health and Safety Executive and BAA Safeguarding (Glasgow Airport) have no objections to the proposal.

4. REPRESENTATIONS

- 4.1** One objection has been received from a neighbouring industrial user at Unit 6, Alpha Centre. Their grounds of objection are as follows:

- the proposal would generate significant additional traffic given the nature of the proposal within an already busy industrial estate.
- safety concerns in relation to parents and children coming to an industrial area with regards to road safety.

5. ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Joint Structure Plan 2006

- 5.1** Strategic Policy 5 (Competitive Economic Framework) requires that planning authorities maintain a ten year industrial land supply, and to develop strategic employment areas including Strategic Industrial and Business Locations and Core Economic Development Areas. Such locations shall be safeguarded from inappropriate alternative uses. The proposal does involve non-industrial use within such an area, but it would be of a relatively minor scale and is thus not considered to be a departure from the strategic policy.

West Dunbartonshire Local Plan 2010

- 5.2** The site is designated for Industrial and Business Use, where Policy LE1 applies. There is a presumption in favour of uses which positively extend the permanent employment potential of such sites, although the policy does allow for the reuse of existing industrial or business class sites for suitable alternative uses where this can be justified against such criteria as specific locational need, there being no adverse impact on the industrial land supply, lack of suitable alternative locations, economic and environmental benefits, and the impact on the attractiveness of the location to industrial and business investment.
- 5.3** The application site is also designated as being within the central Clydebank Core Economic Development Area, (these designations relating to the Structure Plan policy referred to above). Policy LE6 indicates that the area in which the application site is located is strategically important as a location for industrial, business and warehousing uses. Sites within the industrial/business areas shall be safeguarded for economic development uses and there shall be a strong presumption against uses other than for business and industry. The proposal would result in the use of the premises for non-industrial purposes, and is therefore contrary to Policy LE6.

6. ASSESSMENT AGAINST MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Locational Need/Alternative Locations

- 6.1** The applicant has submitted supporting information indicating that the prospective occupier currently has an existing nursery within the Clydebank Industrial Estate. They have been operating within the Clydebank area for 15 years and have been looking to expand their business for the last 4 years but have failed to progress with sites they have examined. The applicant was asked to provide details of the alternative sites which they had explored, but has only specified the earlier application for this site. The existing nursery has a waiting list which has prompted the nursery to seek an alternative

site to expand the business, and has indicated a desire to locate close to Clydebank College.

Impact upon the Industrial Estate

- 6.2** As acknowledged by Policy LE6, the introduction of non-conforming uses within business / industrial sites can be problematic as some such uses can erode the attractiveness of the area to business investors and can undermine the supply of industrial accommodation. Furthermore, both the Economic Development and Estates Services have objected to the potential loss of an industrial unit.
- 6.3** In this case the unit is within a relatively small group of industrial units and the loss of industrial floorspace would have a relatively large impact on the Alpha Centre and the surrounding area. The existing low level of vacancies suggests that there is reasonably high demand for these types of industrial unit. Whilst there is one other vacant unit within the Alpha Centre, there is understood to be reasonably strong demand for such units from business/industrial class users. Whilst the overall impact on the area's industrial land supply would not in itself be major, the incremental loss of industrial floorspace should generally not be encouraged as this would ultimately have an impact. The introduction of a nursery to this area is likely to alter the industrial character of the estate as there are not currently any non industrial/business uses.

Access and Parking

- 6.4** The main difference between this application and the earlier application on the site is that the public access is now proposed to be on Cart Street, a change which seeks to address the concerns about young children having to walk through an industrial estate in order to access the site on foot which was a reason for refusal of the previous application. As a result only staff access and parking is expected to take place within the Alpha Centre car park, and it would address the previous concerns and those of the objector about road safety and parking within the industrial estate. However, whilst the relocation of the public access to Cart Street would address the previous concerns about pedestrian safety within the industrial estate, it would give rise to new problems arising from the absence of dedicated parking spaces serving the public entrance.
- 6.5** As none of the parking spaces would be accessible from Cart Street, no dedicated parking would be provided for dropping off/picking up children. This would take place on Cart Street, which currently experiences a very high level of on-street parking generated by Clydebank College and by nearby businesses, and is also an access into Rothesay Dock. It is likely that parents finding no available parking spaces at the end of Cart Street will be tempted to double park or otherwise leave their vehicles in unsafe positions whilst dropping off or picking up their children, and it is considered that this would cause a hazard to road safety. It is accepted that a proportion of the parents using the facility would be college students or staff, or people working in the new business park at Queens Quay, who are already parking in the area and would not generate new trips, but it is nonetheless inevitable that a significant proportion of the children would be dropped off on Cart Street giving rise to the problems discussed above.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1** The proposed use is contrary to the adopted Local Plan as the site is safeguarded for business and industrial use, and it is not considered that there is sufficient justification to allow a departure from policy. While it is accepted there is a demand for pre-school nursery provision in the area it is not considered that this small but busy industrial estate would be an appropriate location for such a development, and alternative locations would be more appropriate. Additionally, whilst the changes to the position of the public access have addressed the previous concerns about road safety within the industrial estate, they would instead create new problems to Cart Street which are considered to be detrimental to road safety.

8. RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1** **Refuse** planning permission for the reasons set out in Section 9 below.

9. REASONS

- 1. The proposed use is contrary to Policy LE1 and GD1 of the West Dunbartonshire Local Plan as the proposed use would have an adverse impact on both existing and future industrial development in the immediate area. The use of the building as a pre-school nursery is not considered an appropriate use for this building in this location.**
- 2. The proposed use fails to comply with the requirements of Policies LE1 and GD1 of the West Dunbartonshire Local Plan in that it does not provide adequate provision for the safe parking of vehicles whilst dropping off/picking up children from an industrial access road where on-street parking is already at capacity. The proposal would therefore have a detrimental impact on road safety.**

Elaine Melrose
Executive Director of Housing, Environmental
and Economic Development
Date: 23 February 2012

Person to Contact: Pamela Clifford, Planning & Building Standards Manager,
Housing, Environmental and Economic Development,
Council Offices, Clydebank, G81 1TG.
01389 738656
email: Pamela.Clifford@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Appendix: None

Background Papers:

1. Application forms, plans and supporting documents;
2. Letters of representation;
3. Consultation responses, and
4. West Dunbartonshire Local Plan 2010;
5. Glasgow & Clyde Valley Joint Structure Plan 2006

Wards affected: Ward 6 (Clydebank Waterfront)