

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

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

Planning Committee: 6 December 2011

DC11/217: Change of use from industrial unit to private members gym at Block 10, Baird Court, Clydebank by Dynamic Core Solutions.

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1** The application is contrary to the development plan and under the terms of the approved Scheme of Delegation it requires to be determined by the Planning Committee.

2. DEVELOPMENT DETAILS

- 2.1** This application relates to the change of use of a vacant industrial unit into a gym. The unit is 517 square metres in size and is located within a crescent-shaped group of similarly sized industrial units. Some of these units are presently occupied, however in addition to the application property three of the other units are vacant. Communal parking spaces exist in a court in front of the buildings to serve the units. No external changes are proposed to the building, which the letting agent has advised has been vacant since March 2010.
- 2.2** The applicant proposes to provide a private members' personal training gym facility for adults, primarily aimed at those working within the Business Park, in the wider Town Centre or living in the area. A total of 3 members of staff would be employed, with two members of staff normally operating the premises between 7am-9pm during the week and 10am-6pm at weekends. The proposal is not intended as a standard gym, but rather the concept is that a small number of customers would attend by appointment (4 or 5 people per hour) for tailored exercise programmes with a personal trainer on hand. The applicant has indicated that numbers may increase slightly if demand justified this, however they would wish to maintain the personalised character of the session with a high staff to customer ratio.
- 2.3** Whilst the business park primarily consists of office and industrial uses, there are a small number of other uses, including a dance studio/gym at 3 Fleming Court, 2 North Avenue (approved by decision DC08/001/COU).

3. CONSULTATIONS

- 3.1** West Dunbartonshire Council Roads Services have no objection to this proposal.

4. REPRESENTATIONS

- 4.1** None.

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 not considered to be a departure from the strategic policy.

West Dunbartonshire Local Plan 2010

- 5.2** The Clydebank Business Park is designated as an Industrial and Business Use Site, 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 Business Park is also designated as a Strategic Industrial and Business Location, and is within the central Clydebank Core Economic Development Area, (these designations relating to the Structure Plan policy referred to above). Policy LE6 indicates that the Business Park is strategically important as a location for industrial, business and warehousing uses. Sites within the Business Park 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. However, as discussed below in Section 6 it is considered that the impact of this would be minor and acceptable, and that the proposal would not conflict with policy LE1.

6. ASSESSMENT AGAINST MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Locational Need / Alternative Locations

- 6.1** The applicant currently operates a gym in the south side of Glasgow, but the current premises are too small for the needs of the business, and the applicant has been looking for suitable alternative premises for almost 3 years. Due to the specialist equipment used, the business requires an open plan unit with a concrete floor and relatively high ceiling height, and apart from purpose-built units it is very difficult to find such a property other than in industrial estate locations. The applicant would ideally like a town centre location, so that the business is as accessible as possible, but he indicates that it has proved particularly difficult to find any suitable premises despite an extensive search.
- 6.2** As the gym business is of a specialist type, it draws clients from a relatively wide catchment, and the applicant initially sought a site within Glasgow City centre, however the very high rental costs of city centre buildings and the fact that most suitable premises would have required adaptation from retail or office use made this

unviable. The applicant then considered sites elsewhere in Glasgow, in particular in the north-west of the city, but of at least 16 sites considered none were found to be viable, either because the work required to convert the building would have been prohibitive, or because the site was unsuitable for a gym use. The application property within Clydebank Business Park would lend itself to the proposed use without requiring major modifications, and is in an easily accessible location which would be convenient for customers living around the north and west of the city, with good public transport access by way of Singer station and bus services. The applicant also anticipates that the location within a significant employment area would encourage its patronage by people working in the business park, as well as local residents. Officers suggested the possibility of using property within Clydebank Town Centre, such as vacant first floor accommodation above the shopping centre, but the applicant indicates that no suitable sites were identified in the town centre, with the lack of concrete floors in upper floor accommodation being a particular problem.

- 6.3** Therefore, whilst there is no specific locational need for the gym to be located at this particular site, the nature of the business is such that the type of accommodation required is most likely to be available within business or industrial locations. The applicant has investigated numerous alternative premises over a relatively wide area, and has been unable to source suitable alternative premises. It is therefore considered that it is appropriate to locate the gym within a business park, and the Clydebank Business Park is appropriate for this purpose due to its convenient location and good public transport.

Impact on Business Park

- 6.4** 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. However, in this case the loss of industrial floorspace would be relatively small scale and would not have a significant impact on the industrial land supply. The applicant has indicated that the letting agent has 14 units presently vacant within the Business Park which are presently being marketed. The proposed gym operation would have a limited number of visitors and the site has good access for pedestrians so there would not be a conflict with heavy goods vehicles. Gyms can be complementary uses within industrial areas/business parks, as they are often used by workers. There is already one gym elsewhere within the Business Park which has contributed to the vitality of the area and has caused no detriment to the viability of the business park, and it is considered that another gym would be acceptable. However, a proliferation of non-industrial uses would not be desirable and any further proposals for similar uses would still require to be assessed on their own merits.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1** Whilst the proposal conflicts with Policy LE6, it is considered that the proposed gym can be accommodated within the Business Park without causing any significant adverse impact on the surrounding businesses or resulting in a significant loss of employment land. The proposed use is considered to be complementary to the business park, and the applicant has demonstrated that they have been unable to

find suitable alternative premises. Therefore the proposed use is considered to acceptable in this instance.

8. RECOMMENDATION

8.1 Grant full planning permission subject to conditions set out in Section 9 below.

9. CONDITIONS

- 01. The development hereby approved shall commence within a period of 3 years from the date of this decision notice.**
- 02. Notwithstanding the provisions of Town and Country Planning General Permitted Development (Scotland) Order 1992 and the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Scotland) Order 1997, the premises shall be used as a gym only, and not for any other purpose (including another 'Class 11' purpose) without the express permission of the Planning Authority.**
- 03. The developer shall submit to the Planning Authority in writing upon the forms specified for the purpose and attached to this decision notice:**
 - a) A Notice of Commencement of Development as soon as practicable once it is decided to commence the development hereby approved (which shall be prior to the development commencing);**
 - b) A Notice of Completion of Development as soon as practicable once the development has been completed.**

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and Economic Development
Date: 21 November 2011

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Appendix: None.

Background Papers:

1. Planning application and plans.
2. Consultation responses.
3. West Dunbartonshire Local Plan 2010.

Wards affected: Clydebank Waterfront