

Your ref: PP- 03997978

Our ref: 33618

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Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: FULL PLANNING APPLICATION FOR CHANGE OF USE FROM A1 TO A1/D2 (FLEXIBLE USE) AT UNIT 3 CENTRAL RETAIL PARK, CENTRAL ROAD, WREXHAM

Please find enclosed a full planning application that seeks permission for a change of use from A1 to A1 and D2 (flexible use) at Unit 3 Central Retail Park in Wrexham Town Centre. The application is submitted on behalf of Pure Gym Ltd which intends to operate a new gym from the site. All of the supporting information has been submitted electronically via the Planning Portal (Ref. PP - 03997978) and the appropriate fee was paid via the online payment system available on the portal. This covering letter contains important information in support of the planning application.

Background and Proposed Development

Central Retail Park is located to the southwest of Wrexham Town Centre and is accessed from Central Road which is a one-way section of the town centre ring road running between Bradley Street and Regent Street. To the east of the retail park is the Island Green Retail Park and Wrexham Central Station, whilst Wrexham General Station is located a short distance to the north. A number of small retail units have recently been constructed to the north of the retail park, fronting Regent Street, and tenants include Majestic Wine.

Existing tenants at Central Retail Park include Dunelm, which occupies a large freestanding unit to the north of the site, and Harveys and SCS within the main retail terrace. A Pizza Hut restaurant is located to the opposite side of Central Road. Unit 3 was previously occupied by Dreams but is currently one of three vacant units at the site which together provide approximately 2,800 sq. m of unoccupied retail floorspace.

Planning permission was originally granted for the retail park in July 2004 (Ref: P/2004/0660) on the site of the former Carlsberg Tetley Brewery. The permission allows for non-food retail warehousing and condition no. 18 states that *'the use of the retail units shall be strictly limited to the sale of non-food goods'*. Service hours are restricted to between 6am and 10pm but there are no restrictions on hours of opening.

The proposed change of use is required to enable Pure Gym to take occupation of the vacant Unit 3. This follows difficulties in securing retail tenants at the retail park, as evidenced by the high level of floorspace that is currently unoccupied. Pure Gym was launched as a low cost, high value gym operator in February 2009 and provides members with access to an excellent range of over 220

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pieces of state of the art, brand new cardiovascular and fitness machinery twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. It operates over 70 branches throughout the UK, although the proposed gym would only be the third in Wales (after Cardiff and Newport). The gym would occupy total floorpace of 1,394 sq. m over three existing levels, as indicated on the proposed layout drawing (Drawing No: SK05-02-15-01). The free weight area would be located to the ground floor, with cardiovascular and conditioning equipment located to ground and first floors. Studio space would be located to the rear of the ground floor and at basement level, whilst changing facilities would be located at first floor. The development does not propose any external alterations to the existing building.

The Principle of the Proposed Development

The proposed development involves the change of use of A1 floorspace to A1 and D2 (flexible use). Whilst the proposed Pure Gym use would fall into Use Class D2, the landlord wishes to retain the benefit of non-food retail use at the application site, hence the request for a flexible planning permission in this case. Such an approach was taken recently at Ashton-under-Lyne where Tameside Council granted planning permission to Pure Gym for a change of use from A1 to flexible use A1 and D2. A copy of that planning permission, which is dated 1st October 2014, is enclosed with this application.

Chapter 10 of Planning Policy Wales (PPW), published in July 2014, addresses 'Planning for Retail and Town Centres'. It states that established town centres are the most appropriate locations for retailing, leisure and other complementary functions, and that a complementary mix of uses should sustain and enhance the vitality, attractiveness and viability of those centres. Paragraph 10.3.1 states that when determining applications for uses that are best located in a town centre, local planning authorities should take account of various matters including:

- the need for the development/extension, unless the proposal is for a site within a defined centre or one allocated in an up-to-date development plan;
- the sequential approach to site selection;
- impact on existing centres; and
- accessibility by a variety of modes of travel, impact on overall travel patterns and the best use of land close to any transport hub, in terms of density and mixed use.

The Proposals Map accompanying the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan (discussed further below) shows that the application site is located within Wrexham Town Centre and that it is therefore an appropriate location for the proposed D2 use. The site's town centre location means that it satisfies the sequential approach to site selection and that there is no requirement to demonstrate the need for the development.

In impact terms we note that the proposal will deliver the beneficial re-use of a vacant unit within the town centre, thereby generating additional visits, supporting the trade of other town centre uses and encouraging further investment. It will also help to diversify the existing mix of uses within the town centre and support its overall viability, as well as supporting efforts to encourage non-drinking related night-time activity within the centre. Overall, the proposals will clearly have a positive impact on the vitality, attractiveness and viability of Wrexham Town Centre.

As noted above, the application site is also highly accessible, there will be no significant impact on overall travel patterns (compared the approved use of the unit), and the re-occupation of the site for the proposed D2 use will support a mix of uses that will help to make the best use of land in close proximity to nearby transport hubs, including the two railway stations and associated public transport facilities that are located a short distance from the application.

Chapter 4 of PPW addresses 'Planning for Sustainability' and states at paragraph 4.7.6 that local planning authorities should '*encourage a mix of uses in town centres*' in order to promote the integration of different uses in accessible locations and therefore '*increase social inclusion, reduce*



the need to travel and makes towns safer for people both day and night'. The proposed use will support all of these objectives, offering affordable gym facilities in an accessible location and on a 24 hour basis which promotes activity throughout the night making the town centre safer for its other users.

We also note that Chapter 11 sets the Welsh Government's planning objectives for sport and recreation, and that these include *'the provision of innovative, user-friendly, accessible facilities to make our urban areas, particularly town centres, more attractive places where people will choose, to live, to work and to visit'* (paragraph 11.1.3). The Pure Gym concept is highly innovative and the proposed gym will be the first such facility in North Wales, making Wrexham Town Centre a more attractive place to live and work, particularly for younger people.

In terms of local planning policy, the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan (UDP), adopted in 2005, contains Policy S3 which states that, in order to sustain its vitality and viability, Wrexham Town Centre will be the preferred location for non-shopping uses such as offices providing services to the public and major leisure uses. We also note that Policy H14 of the UDP allocated the former brewery site at Central Road for mixed-use redevelopment including housing, employment and leisure uses. The introduction of a non-retail use at the Central Retail Park would support the original objectives of the site's UDP allocation.

Other Issues

A Design and Access Statement is not required to support an application for change of use and in this case there are no external alterations associated with the proposed development. The existing access arrangements will be retained with adequate levels of car parking available within the retail park. As explained above, the application site is also highly accessible by a range of sustainable modes of transport. Data from other Pure Gym sites indicates that up to 50 per cent of staff and members walk, cycle or use public transport to travel to the gym.

Summary

The application proposal entirely accords with the provisions of national and local planning policy. The provision of a twenty four hour gym at the application site will support the vitality and viability of the town centre and the diversity of uses present within the existing retail park whilst the provision of an affordable exercise and fitness centre within Wrexham will serve to encourage healthy lifestyles and participation in sport.

We trust that this is in order and look forward to hearing from you in due course. If in the meantime, you have any queries then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

JONATHAN WADCOCK
Associate

For and on behalf of
PETER BRETT ASSOCIATES LLP