



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

13 JUNE 2019

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, PLANNING

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Members are asked to determine the planning application outlined below:

APPLICATION NO: 19/0328/08
(GH)
APPLICANT: Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
DEVELOPMENT: Change of use from class D2 leisure centre to mixed use development comprising of class use D2 leisure centre & B1 office accommodation. (Revised plans, including site location plan, incorporating conversion of ground floor meeting room to provide additional office space and data centre, received 30th April 2019).
LOCATION: RHONDDA FACH LEISURE CENTRE, EAST STREET, TYLORSTOWN, FERNDAL, CF43 3HR
DATE REGISTERED: 26/03/2019
ELECTORAL DIVISION: Tylorstown

RECOMMENDATION: GRANT SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS BELOW:

REASONS:

The proposed change of use of redundant space within the Rhondda Fach Leisure Centre would have no impact on the overall appearance of the building.

In addition, the location of the site away from the closest dwellings, means that neither the existing leisure or proposed office uses would affect the amenity neighbouring occupiers.

Consequently, the development is considered to be acceptable and would be in accordance with Policies AW5, AW6 and AW10 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan, and the Councils SPG for Access, Circulation and Parking Requirements.

REASON APPLICATION REPORTED TO COMMITTEE

The application has been submitted by the Council on land owned by the Council, where its interest is of more than a minor nature.

APPLICATION DETAILS

Full planning consent is sought for a change of use to provide a ground floor data centre and first floor office space, at Rhondda Fach Leisure Centre, East Street, Tylorstown.

To the ground floor a former conference space is proposed to be laid out to accommodate an enclosed data centre, with space for twenty-two data racks and ancillary space for workstations and storage.

Part of the foyer to the side of the building would comprise a small fenced service compound for supporting plant, including air-conditioning condensing units. This would require some minor modification to the existing fenestration at the rear of the foyer.

In addition a redundant first floor gym and free weights area is proposed to be converted to an open plan office for the purposes of accommodating staff workspaces.

The plans accompanying the application demonstrate that internal alterations to the layout of the gym would enable the installation of 76 desks, together with 3 separate small offices, a meeting room, staff kitchen and bathrooms.

In support of the application the applicant has advised that Rhondda Fach Leisure Centre has undergone extensive internal refurbishment over the last 18 months, which has seen the complete refurbishment of the existing swimming pool and ground floor areas into a new state of the art fitness studio, which is the biggest in any of the Council owned Leisure Centres.

The proposal to convert a small part of the building to office accommodation has been presented to ensure the Council maximises existing surplus floor space as part of a wider county wide office accommodation strategy. The change of use would have no negative impact on the existing fitness provision currently on offer at the centre and the applicant anticipated that the additional footfall of office staff through the centre would have a positive impact on its usage.

SITE APPRAISAL

The application property is the Rhondda Fach Leisure Centre, which is located to the north-east of the settlement of Tylorstown.

Set both within the settlement boundary and a dense bank of woodland, the site is accessed from a dedicated junction with East Street, with provision for users of the Centre to park to the front of the southern elevation.

The two storey building is of a contemporary style having benefited from a substantial refurbishment in 2018, which provided additional facilities including an indoor 4G pitch and resulted in the removal of the swimming pool. However, on account of its setting and position lower than the surrounding development, the Centre is very well screened and has little impact on the street scene.

The closest neighbouring properties are located at East Road and Prospect Place to the south and west, and comprise terraced dwellings of typical Victorian scale and style.

PLANNING HISTORY

There are no recent or relevant applications on record with this site

PUBLICITY

The application was advertised by direct notification to thirty neighbouring properties and notices were erected on site. On receipt of the revised plans a further consultation took place.

No letters of objection or representation have been received to either consultation.

CONSULTATION

Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water - no objection.

Highways and Transportation - no objection.

Public Health and Protection - conditions are recommended in respect of demolition, noise, dust, waste and hours of operation. However, since the development concerns a change of use, these would be considered unnecessary.

Drainage - no objection since the external hard standing area would not be modified and there would be no effect on surface water.

No other consultation responses have been received within the statutory period.

POLICY CONTEXT

Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan

The application site lies within the settlement boundary for Tylorstown

Policy AW5 - sets out criteria for new development in relation to amenity and accessibility.

Policy AW6 - requires development to involve a high quality design and to make a positive contribution to place making, including landscaping.

Policy AW10 - supports development proposals which are not detrimental to public health or the environment.

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Access, Circulation and Parking Requirements

National Guidance

In the determination of planning applications, regard should also be given to the requirements of National Planning Policy which are not duplicated in the Local Development Plan, particularly where National Planning Policy provides a more up to date and comprehensive policy on certain topics.

The Welsh Government published Planning Policy Wales 10 on 5th December 2018, and the document aims to incorporate the objectives of the Well-being of Future generations Act into Town & Country Planning.

It is considered that this proposal meets the seven wellbeing of future generations goals inasmuch as they relate to the proposed development and that the site has been brought forward in a manner consistent with the five ways of working.

It is considered that the proposed development is consistent with the key principles and requirements for placemaking as set down in Chapter 2 People and Places: Achieving Well-being Through Placemaking, of PPW10 and is also consistent with the following inasmuch as they relate to the development

Chapter 1 (Managing New Development)

Chapter 2 (Maximising Well-Being and Sustainable Places through Placemaking)

Chapter 4 (Active and Social Places)

Other policy guidance considered:

REASONS FOR REACHING THE RECOMMENDATION

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that, if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purposes of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Furthermore, applications that are not in accordance with relevant policies in the plan should not be allowed, unless material considerations justify the grant of planning permission.

Main Issues:

Principle of the proposed development

The application relates to the change of use of part of the first floor of the Rhondda Fach Leisure Centre, to provide additional office space for employees of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Whilst noting that the Centre would already be expected to accommodate a degree of ancillary office space for the purposes of its management, the development would be considered to constitute a mixed use by virtue of the scale of the new office and that the staff accommodated would not be directly related to the running of the site.

The applicant has confirmed that the reduction of floor space available for leisure use would not be detrimental to users as it is surplus to requirements. Thus in this regard the key matter is whether the office use would be compatible with the existing leisure activities; and based on the information and plans provided, there is no reason to assume otherwise.

Consequently, the principle of the development is considered to be acceptable, subject to the material considerations below.

Impact on the character and appearance of the area

The development would not involve any significant external construction work which would result in a change of appearance to the building.

Therefore there are no considerations or concerns in this regard.

Impact on neighbouring occupiers

Notwithstanding that the Leisure Centre is set away from the closest residential development, the introduction of further office space and the data centre at the building would be unlikely to have a negative impact on residents since it would neither cause noise or disruption that could affect amenity.

There is some concern that the staff to be located in the Centre might be affected by any daytime activities, since the office space would be quite close to some of the indoor provision. However, should such conflict arise, this site and its operations are within the control of the Council to resolve.

Therefore, in terms of the impact of the development on neighbouring occupiers and in the absence of any representations to the contrary, the application is considered to be acceptable.

Highways and accessibility

The application site is served from an existing access point which provides safe and satisfactory access.

The Highways and Transportation Section has noted that no information has been provided with regard to the existing number of leisure centre to enable assessment of the car parking requirement for the existing use. However, it is anticipated it would be in excess of the proposed office use which, according to the Council's SPG for Access, Circulation and Parking, would require a maximum of 32 spaces.

There are approximately 68 spaces within the front car park and 40 unmarked spaces to the rear taking the total to in the region of 108 spaces. Consequently, taking into account that the peak times between the office and sports facilities would be different, the proposal, on balance, is acceptable.

Furthermore the rear car parking area is not used. The proposed office car parking requirement could be accommodated to the rear which is acceptable.

There is also potential to create additional off-street car parking to the rear by extending the existing car park and formally marking out car parking spaces to fully utilise the space; should a future need arise.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Liability

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was introduced in Rhondda Cynon Taf from 31 December 2014.

The application is for development of a kind that is not CIL liable under the CIL Regulations 2010 (as amended).

Conclusion

It is considered the proposal would have no impact on the character and appearance of the locality or upon the residential amenity of the surrounding neighbouring properties. The additional use would not diminish or conflict with the established leisure use and the application is therefore considered to comply with Policies AW5, AW6 and AW10 of the Local Development Plan.

RECOMMENDATION: GRANT SUBJECT TO THE BELOW CONDITIONS:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Sections 91 and 93 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans:

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and details and documents received on 26th March 2019 and 30th April 2019.

Reason: To ensure compliance with the approved plans and documents and to clearly define the scope of the permission.

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