

3/08/2089/FP – Windows and external fire escape stairs to rear to serve new first floor gym and front and side elevation louvres at Hartham Leisure Centre, Hertford, SG14 1QR for Sports & Leisure Management Ltd.

Date of Receipt: 12.12.2008

Type: Full

Parish: HERTFORD

Ward: HERTFORD - BENGEO

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:-

1. Three year time limit (1T12)
2. Prior to any building works being commenced, the external materials of construction and finished paint colour for the windows, staircase and louvres hereby permitted shall be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of the appearance of the development, and in accordance with policy ENV1 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.

3. Prior to the commencement of development, elevation drawings of the louvres, at a scale of no less than 1:50, shall be submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of the appearance of the development, and in accordance with policy ENV1 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.

Directives:

1. Other legislation

Summary of the Reasons for Decision:

The proposal has been considered with regard to the policies of the Development Plan (East of England Plan May 2008, Hertfordshire County Structure Plan, Minerals Local Plan, Waste Local Plan and East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007), and in particular policies SD5, GBC1, ENV1, ENV19 and BH5. The balance of the considerations having regard to those policies is that permission should be granted.

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1.0 Background

- 1.1 The application site is shown on the attached OS extract and comprises an established leisure centre with indoor swimming pool and outdoor recreation space located just outside the built-up area of Hertford and within the Green Belt and green finger of Hartham Common. The site and surroundings are within the Hertford Conservation Area.
- 1.2 This application proposes to install windows and a fire escape staircase to the first floor north elevation of the building in order to convert the first floor to a gym. The application also proposes louvre ventilation grills in the east and west first floor elevations. The refurbishment works are part of an upgrade of leisure facilities with enlarged gymnasium, improved changing facilities and erection of a flexible studio space.
- 1.3 The internal works to facilitate this gym conversion do not require planning consent as they do not amount to development; the provision of a gym is not considered to constitute a material change of use, and there was no restriction on the floorspace of the original approval in 1988.
- 1.4 The application has been brought to Committee as the leisure centre comes under East Herts District Council ownership.

2.0 Site History

3/98/1331/FP	Single storey gymnasium extension and single storey plant room extension with amendments to external car park area.	Approved with Conditions 14-Oct-1998
3/97/1258/RP	New dry facilities extension and alterations to Hartham.	Approved with Conditions 10-Dec-1997
3/97/0539/OP	New dry facilities extension and alterations to Hartham.	Approved with Conditions 30-Jul-1997
3/88/1436/DC	Conversion of existing outdoor pool to indoor use.	Approved with Conditions 214-Sep-1988

3.0 Consultation Responses

- 3.1 Environmental Health raise no objection to the application but suggest conditions on construction working hours and land contamination.

4.0 Town Council Representations

4.1 Hertford Town Council have no objection to the proposal.

5.0 Other Representations

5.1 The applications have been advertised by way of press notice, site notice and neighbour notification.

5.2 No third party representations have been received.

6.0 Policy

6.1 The policies of the Local Plan that are considered to be most relevant in this case are:-

SD5	Development on Contaminated Land
GBC1	Appropriate Development in the Green Belt
ENV1	Design and Environmental Quality
ENV19	Development in Areas Liable to Flood
BH5	Extensions and Alterations to Unlisted Buildings in Conservation Areas

6.2 National guidance is also provided in PPS1 'Sustainable Development' and PPG2 'Green Belts'.

7.0 Considerations

7.1 The main issues in this case relate to the appropriateness of the development in the Green Belt, the visual effect of the proposed works, and their impact the surrounding Conservation Area. Although the internal works create additional floorspace, little weight is given to this in planning terms as permission is only required for the external alterations proposed.

7.2 The site lies just outside the built-up area of Hertford and hence within the Green Belt. Given that this application does not propose any new building, only minor external alterations to an established leisure centre, it maintains openness and does not conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt and is therefore considered to constitute appropriate development that is acceptable in principle, in accordance with PPG2 (para 3.12).

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- 7.3 In design terms, the introduction of a row of windows in the first floor north elevation and provision of an external staircase are considered to be acceptable. The windows are proposed to be of a horizontal slot design and will serve to visually break up the north elevation cladding. The proposed staircase is to be constructed of galvanised steel; further details of the finish are recommended by way of condition.
- 7.4 In terms of visual effect, both the windows and staircase will be well-screened behind existing trees, which have matured since permission was originally granted for the building. These trees are on Council owned land and can be maintained to continue their valuable screening role.
- 7.5 The proposed louvres will be sited at first floor level on the east and west elevation and are proposed to be painted to match the existing cladding. The exact size of these louvres is unclear, although indicative drawings have been submitted. Officers consider that a condition to provide further information would be acceptable in this case. There are no immediate neighbours to be disturbed through noise emissions.
- 7.6 Impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding Conservation Area is also considered to be minimal given the design of the works, and the screening of the north elevation by mature trees. A condition is recommended to ensure that the materials used are high quality and in-keeping.
- 7.7 The site lies in Floodzone 2, however given the minor nature of the works proposed there will be no unacceptable risk or exacerbation of flooding. Consultation with the Environment Agency was not necessary in this case.
- 7.8 Environmental Health have suggested conditions; however it is not considered necessary to condition the hours of construction working given the lack of immediate neighbours, nor is it considered reasonable to require further information on land contamination given the nature of works proposed.
- 7.9 This application forms only part of the leisure centre's proposals for a refurbishment of the building and provision of a gym at first floor. However, as previously stated, planning consent is not required for these internal works. Limited weight is therefore given to the intensification of the use, or issues such as car parking provision, although there would be no objection on these grounds given the proximity of nearby car parks.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 The proposal is of a minor nature and is not considered to cause any harm to the openness of the Green Belt or character of the surrounding Conservation Area.
- 8.2 The development will enable enhanced leisure facilities and public benefits at an accessible location within the town, and the application complies with relevant local plan policies. It is therefore recommended for approval subject to the conditions set out above.