

Planning Committee

26 April 2011

Reference:
11/00139

Area Team:
South Team

Case Officer:
Mrs S Lacey

Ward:
Bromborough

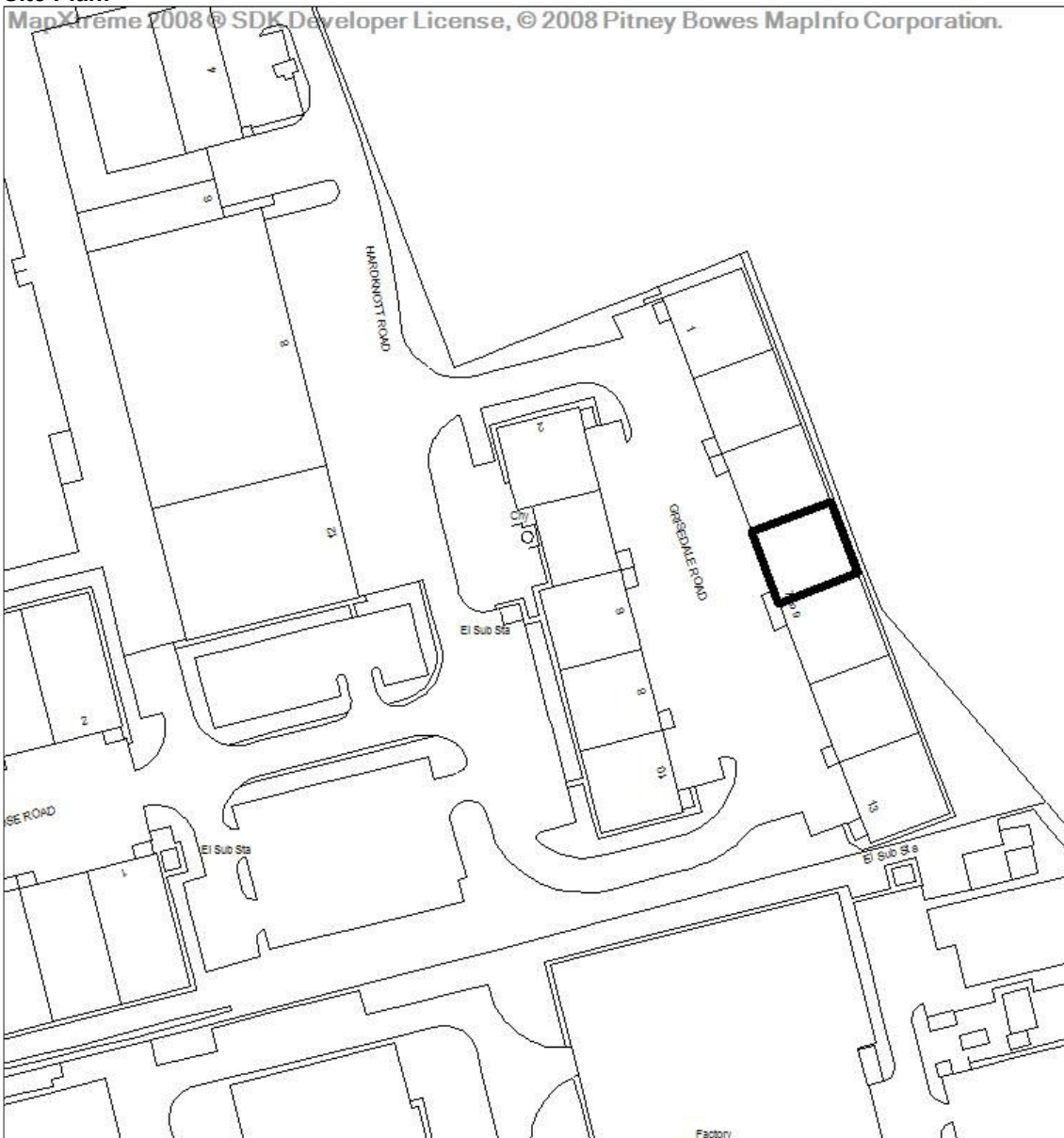
Location:
Proposal:

7 GRISEDALE ROAD, BROMBOROUGH, CH62 3QA
Change of use from B1 (Business), B2 (General Industry) and B8 (Storage or Distribution) to D2 (Assembly and Leisure), B1 and B8 to use the building as a central headquarters for Wirral & Chester Taekwondo. Primary use as a taekwondo centre and retaining existing office accommodation and a small storage area for equipment.

Applicant:
Agent :

Wirral & Chester Taekwondo
N/A

Site Plan:



Development Plan allocation and policies:

Primarily Industrial Area

Planning History:

APP/10/00644 - Change of use from B1, B2, B8 to D2, B1, B8. Primary use as a taekwondo centre and retaining existing office accommodation and a small storage area for equipment - Refused 12/08/2010

Summary Of Representations and Consultations Received:**REPRESENTATIONS**

3 letters of notification were sent to neighbouring properties and a site notice was displayed. No objections were received.

Fourteen letters of support were received from interested parties, including the owners of the site, citing the following comments:

1. The Old Hall Estate has a gross internal area of 109,984 sq.ft of which 27,500 sq.ft is currently available, equating to 25% void space, for in excess of 1 year;
2. All marketing strategies are in place to raise awareness of the voids (websites, mailshots, marketing boards, brochures, involving Local Inward Investment Agencies) and incentives are available;
3. Vacant units deteriorate and blight the whole Estate;
4. Since the economic downturn enquiry levels have suffered;
5. The units are deemed unsuitable for industrial uses due to the influx of more modern industrial units, tenants can obtain far more favourable deals on modern units, the majority of industrial occupiers requires eaves to be 6m in height, these units are 5m in height;
6. There is over 100 acres of undeveloped land on Wirral International Business Park for future employment use;
7. The proposal will benefit the community;
8. The proposal will lift the attractiveness of the site and Wirral as a destination for sporting excellence;
9. The new centre will develop potential world class Tae Kwon Do practitioners;
10. The proposal will provide greater opportunity to train;
11. The new centre will tailored specifically for the sport;
12. The new centre will provide young people with an outlet for their energies, gain self confidence, self-esteem and respect for others;
13. The new centre will reduce crime;
14. The new centre will provide an opportunity to promote and expand a popular method of fitness

Councillor Niblock removed the application from delegation on the grounds the proposal would provide a unique training/education facility on the Wirral and would provide employment and employment prospects, the building has remained empty for some time and is of no employment use.

CONSULTATIONS

The Director of Technical Services, Traffic Management: No objection subject to cycle stands

The Director of Law, HR & Asset Management (Pollution Control Section): No objection.

The Merseyside Cycling Campaign: No secure covered cycle storage

Sports England: No objection

Director's Comments:**REASON FOR REFERRAL TO PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Councillor Niblock removed the application from delegation on the grounds that the change of use would provide a unique training/education facility on the Wirral and would continue to provide employment and provide others with the opportunity to train and thus enhance employment prospects. The building has been marketed for some time but continues to remain empty and thus not provide any employment use.

INTRODUCTION

The application proposes a change of use to a taekwondo centre. The applicant has stated the need for a dedicated space and a larger building to hold classes for adults and children.

The site is designated as a Primarily Industrial Area, and the land is designated for industrial uses. A previous application for a taekwondo centre was refused on the grounds the Sequential Test did not fully demonstrate this is the only suitable location for the proposed development and that there are no more central sites for the development. A more detailed Sequential Test is required before a D2 Assembly and Leisure use can be approved in a primarily Industrial Area. The proposal was contrary to the principles of policy EM8 and was refused.

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

The proposal conflicts with the provisions of policy EM8 of the adopted Wirral Unitary Development Plan and National Planning Policy Statement PPS4..

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The site comprises of an industrial unit with roller shutters and parking provision, situated in an industrial area of similar units used for B1, B2 and B8 uses.

POLICY CONTEXT

The application is contrary to UDP Proposal EM8, which only makes provision for B1, B2 and B8 uses subject to UDP Policies EM6, 7 & 9. Safeguarding the long term supply of employment land is one of the main purposes of the development plan. RSS Policy W2 indicates that sites for regionally significant economic development should not be used for development that could be accommodated elsewhere and they should not be developed piecemeal.

The Council resolved on 2 November 2009 that the Employment Land & Premises Study will be material in the determination of planning applications (minute 49 refers). This shows a shortage in the long term supply of employment land for the Borough and indicates there will be a need to replace provision in the Wirral International Business Park as developable land runs out in the medium to long term. The study, therefore, recommends that employment land in this area should be retained for employment (B1, B2, B8) uses.

UDP Policies REC1 and RE1 make provision for sport and recreation facilities in urban areas that are easily accessible by public transport. RSS Policy L1 sets the regional approach to health, sport, recreation, cultural and education services. This indicates that an assessment of demographic needs should be carried out and that accessibility by public transport, walking and cycling should be a central consideration. While National Policy in PPS4 encourages a positive approach to economic development in general, leisure and more intensive sport and recreation are identified as main town centre uses and are subject to a sequential test that puts town centres first, and number of impact tests. Policy EC17 makes it clear that main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre should be refused where compliance with the sequential approach has not been demonstrated.

APPEARANCE AND AMENITY ISSUES

The land is designated as a Primarily Industrial Area under the Wirral Unitary Development Plan. As such the uses supported in this area are use class B1, B2 and B8. Use class D2 Assembly and Leisure should be directed towards Key Town Centres in accordance with PPS4 and UDP policy SH1 to deliver the Government's objective of promoting vital and viable town centres; to strengthen, and where appropriate, regenerate them.

The Employment Land Use Study cites this area as Wirral's premier business park with good access to the A41 and M53 Motorway. It has a good range of modern industrial and warehouse buildings. It is fit-for-purpose and will have a clear economic role now and over the next 20 years. There is continuing development for a mix of industrial, warehousing and office schemes. Existing, ageing schemes have been refurbished and improved as needed by their occupiers and owners. The study concludes the site will continue to provide good quality accommodation for a full range of SMEs and larger employers.

Approving non-industrial uses in Industrial Areas would result in a loss of suitable sites for B1, B2 and B8 uses, therefore pushing industrial uses outside the designated areas into unsuitable locations. It may also deter industrial uses in surrounding units. The element of B8 is considered ancillary to the D2 use, rather than industrial, in nature.

There are existing clubs across Wirral and Chester in Bebington, Bidston, Eastham, Pensby, Thingwall and Wallasey. All existing clubs, with the exception of Eastham and Bebington, are to remain. Due to the broad catchment area of clubs and members it is considered a sequential test of the key towns centres across the Wirral should demonstrate there are no more central sites for the proposal.

The applicant has supplied a list of alternative venues, predominantly schools and community centres. These have been discounted by the applicant as being unsuitable due to conflicts with other activities, classes cannot be held during the day in schools or after 8pm.

The applicant has not considered town centre locations as part of their assessment.

The proposed site is in an accessible location by car, but this does not comply with SPD4, which encourages sustainable locations by public transport. On the site inspection it was noted the nearest bus stop is 0.2 miles away from the site.

In terms of other material considerations, it may be contended that health benefits could be accrued from the development, however this does not override an unsuitable location where there is no substantial evidence that all other locations have been discounted.

The applicant states the unit has been vacant for in excess of 12 months, however this is not unexpected given the economic conditions. The site is currently suffering from 25 per cent vacancy. It is considered this is not sufficient evidence to allow the proposed use. The Employment Land Use Study set out the need for industrial land in the medium to long term future, and the proposal would result in the loss of a viable industrial unit.

Therefore whilst the building may be suitable in terms of its size for the applicant's requirements, the applicant has not fully demonstrated this is the only suitable location for such a use, or any special circumstances that would support the loss of an industrial unit in an industrial area. Moreover, the proposal, which is targeted at children and young adults, would not relate well with the industrial character of this particular area. The proposal is contrary to the principles of policy EM8 and could undermine the objectives of UDP Policy EM7 which seeks to ensure operations of existing business are not compromised. The application is, therefore, recommended for refusal.

SEPARATION DISTANCES

Separation distances do not apply in this instance, as no residential properties will be affected by the proposed development.

HIGHWAY/TRAFFIC IMPLICATIONS

There are no Highway Implications relating to this proposal.

ENVIRONMENTAL/SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

There are no Environmental/Sustainability issues relating to these proposals.

HEALTH ISSUES

There are no health implications relating to this application.

CONCLUSION

It is considered the Sequential Test has not fully demonstrated this is the only suitable location for the proposed development and that there are no more central sites for the development. A more detailed Sequential Test is required before a D2 Assembly and Leisure use can be approved in a primarily Industrial Area. The proposal is contrary to the principles of policy EM8 and is recommended for refusal.

Recommended

Refuse

Decision:

Reason:

- 1 The site is within the Wirral International Business Park, which is identified by the NWDA as a Strategic Regional Site and is designated as a Primarily Industrial Area in the Wirral Unitary Development Plan (UDP). The application is contrary to UDP Policy EM8 'Development within Primarily Industrial Areas', which only makes provision for development within Use Classes B1, B2 or B8 of the Town & Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 and Policy W2 in the Regional Spatial Strategy, which indicates that site should not be used for development that can be accommodated elsewhere and should not be developed in a piecemeal manner. No material considerations have been identified sufficient to warrant overriding this designation.
- 2 Insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate that the sequential test and impact test to protect town centres can be met in accordance National Planning Policies PPS 4 "Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth" & PPG17 "Planning for New Open Space and Sports and Recreational Facilities".
- 3 The proposal would not relate well with the character of the industrial area and would not be readily compatible with adjoining uses. It is considered that there is potential for adverse effects on the operations of neighbouring businesses, which would be contrary to the intentions of UDP Policy EM6 'General Criteria for New Employment Development'.

Further Notes for Committee:

Last Comments By: 14/03/2011 11:57:50
Expiry Date: 01/04/2011