

Planning Committee: 23 May 2006

Item Number: 06

Application No: W 06 / 0438

Registration Date: 16/03/06

Town/Parish Council: Baginton

Expiry Date: 11/05/06

Case Officer: Joanne Fitzsimons

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**R/O of Dixi Associates, Brandon House, Siskin Drive, Middlemarch
Business Park, Coventry, CV3 4FJ**

Change of use from general industrial (class B2) use to children's indoor play centre and childcare facility (class D1) FOR Donna Sillito & Hanna Youkim

This application is being presented to Committee due to five signatures of support for the application.

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

Parish Council: No objection

WCC Highways: No objection.

No neighbour representations have been received following the submission of the application, however as part of the submission, the applicant has included 5 signatures on a supporting letter.

RELEVANT POLICIES

- (DW) ENV3 - Development Principles (Warwick District Local Plan 1995)
- DP2 - Amenity (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011 Revised Deposit Version).
- (DW) EMP5 - Employment Development in Urban Areas (Warwick District Local Plan 1995)
- SC2 - Protecting Employment Land and Buildings (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011 Revised Deposit Version)
- UAP9 - Directing New Leisure Development (Warwick District 1996 - 2011 Revised Deposit Version)
- (DW) RL7 - Provision of Additional Indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities (Warwick District Local Plan 1995)
- SC7 - Directing Community Facilities (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011 Revised Deposit Version)

PLANNING HISTORY

There have been a number of applications for this site, but the most recent was in 2005 (ref: W05/2102) and was for the subdivision of the building - Brandon House into 2 units. One of these units now forms the application site for this proposal.

KEY ISSUES

The Site and its Location

The site is an existing industrial unit located off Siskin Drive and is within a protected employment area as identified in the Local Plan 1995. The site is approximately 0.27ha with the unit itself being approximately 752 square metres. The site is bounded by palisade fencing and has entrance gates into the site from Woodhams Road.

Details of the Development

The proposal seeks to change the use of the building from general industry (Class B2) to a children's indoor play centre and child care facility (Class D2). The hardstanding area according to the agent has capacity for approximately 30-35 cars. The proposed use is to be geared towards children up to 12 years of age and the applicant's foresee the centre accommodating 60-70 children plus guardians. In association with this, it is proposed to offer an 'Out of School Club' supervising primary school children as well as child care supervision during school holidays. The hours of operation are to be between 10am to 6pm, seven days a week.

Assessment

The applicants have sought to demonstrate that there are no suitable alternative premises closer to the town centres of Coventry or Leamington Spa and have also to a large extent demonstrated the need for the facility. I do not consider however that alternative sites within Coventry have been extensively researched. Clearly, I appreciate that sites nearer the city centre may not provide sufficient space for the use requirements and that a city centre location would make the scheme financially unviable; however no financial evidence has been provided.

In meeting the requirements set out in Government Guidance in the form of PPS 6 'Planning for Town Centres, I am satisfied that the applicant has demonstrated that there is a need for the facility and that this use would not detract from the vitality of town centres. With regard to the accessibility other than reliance of the private car, I am concerned that, whilst the applicant states that there is a bus stop near to the premises and has listed the bus numbers and routes, there is no evidence to confirm the times and frequency of these services, especially at weekends when the majority of the industrial units are closed.

In submitting this application, the applicant also states that there are other factors which should outweigh the policy objection. These being:

- a level of job creation in excess of that which would be reasonably expected from a continued Class B employment use;
- the provision of child care facilities which increase job flexibility for local works;

- compatibility with the stated priorities of both Warwick and Coventry Community Plans;
- support of several employers within the Siskin Drive employment area;
- the change of use is of modest amount of floor space and will make no material difference to the supply of employment land; and
- the reduction in the need to travel as Coventry residents would no longer have to travel to destinations such as Warwick and Stratford in order to visit a play centre.

Whilst the applicant has submitted a detailed statement to demonstrate why this site, within the designated industrial area, is a suitable for this use, I am not satisfied that it has been demonstrated that the unit is unsuitable or unviable and that other employment uses for the unit have been fully explored. I am therefore of the opinion that the proposal is contrary to Policies DW EMP5 of the adopted local plan and SC2 of the emerging local plan. Furthermore Woodhams Road is a designated employment area in the adopted plan and is a protected employment use in the emerging plan.

RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE, for the following refusal reasons listed below.

REASONS

The proposed development site is located in a designated employment area and the proposal would lead to a loss of an employment unit. This is contrary to policy DWEMP5 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1995 which states that development for non-employment uses in designated employment areas will not normally be permitted.

The proposal is also contrary to Policy SC2 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011 Revised Deposit Version which states that the change of use of existing employment buildings will only be permitted if continued employment uses would have an adverse impact on adjacent residential uses or the applicant can demonstrate that the use of the site by another employment use would not be economically viable. The applicant has failed to demonstrate either that either of these circumstances relate to this proposal.
