

Received from Applicant 3/4/14 APP/14/00131

34H ASTON ROAD Change of Use application - Response to Objection

The partners would like to thank the residents of Milton Road for raising their concerns about the application for change of use from B8 to D2 for 34H Aston Road. They had hoped to have addressed many of these issues in their initial application; however, they are happy to provide additional information below in order to address the concerns raised by the residents.

Before responding to the detail of the concerns raised they would like to highlight some additional points not mentioned in the change-of-use application.

1. The intended use for 34H Aston Road is as a CrossFit facility. The most appropriate use category to apply for is D2, however, a CrossFit facility is unlike any other 'gymnasium' facility (both the large, commercial 'Fitness First' type, or the smaller, less commercial 'bodybuilders gym'). CrossFit is a fast-growing, global fitness community which seeks to promote a healthy lifestyle through the use of constantly varied functional movements such as basic gymnastic (pullups, push-ups), weightlifting (Snatch, Clean & Jerk) and mono-structural conditioning (running, skipping etc). The efficacy of the programme is proven and it has made a positive change to the lives of thousands of people around the world. At a time when obesity levels in the UK are soaring, the partners aim to make a positive contribution within the local community and provide a pathway to improved health and longevity for their members.
2. As mentioned in the response by the Economic Development Officer, the facility has the potential to create employment opportunities for members of the local community. At a time when unemployment in the UK is at unprecedented levels, the facility has the potential to make a positive contribution to the nation's efforts to reduce unemployment. During this period of economic crisis, the government has repeatedly stated that it would like to encourage small business start-ups in order to breathe life back into the economy. The partners are investing their own savings in this project with no external support or funding, thus not only creating employment, but also contributing economic development in the local area.
3. The partners involved in this project include a serving Royal Marines Officer and a Firefighter. We do not mention this to garner any favour, but merely to highlight that we are all upstanding members of the local community who would not seek to deliberately cause any disturbance or antisocial fallout from this venture. Another of the partners is a local estate agent who has a good working knowledge of both commercial and domestic property in the area. This partner also has a sound understanding of the type of facility we plan to open and does not envisage that our facility has the potential to cause any disturbance to the residential dwellings on Milton Road.

Detailed responses to the concerns raised by the residents of Milton Road:

1. Whilst the proposal states the opening hours are from 0700 – 2000 Mon to Sat, the facility will not be in use for the duration of this period. Saturday usage will be limited to 0900 – 1200 and weekday usage will involve morning (0700 – 0800), lunchtime (1200 – 1400) and evening (1700 – 2000) classes, so not the thirteen hours of potential for disturbance mentioned. The partners acknowledge that the morning and evening classes do sit outside the normal working day, however, as outlined below there will be little actual disturbance caused by these opening hours.

2. The partners propose to remove the derelict and unsightly 'lean to' at the rear of the building to create additional car parking spaces. It is acknowledged that there were not previously parking spaces in this location, however there has always been a driving route to the rear of the unit and there is already a large car park to the side of the unit that also backs onto the residential dwellings. Both the rear of the unit and the car park to the side are currently overgrown, littered, untidy, and there is evidence of recent fly tipping. This poses a security and fire risk, as well as increased potential for pollution due to the lack of security and obvious recent fly-tipping. This project would see the area secured through an increased and overt presence, the litter/waste removed, and the area tidied; which should all be viewed as positive developments by the residents of Milton Road and other business owners in the immediate vicinity. The target audience for the membership base are the residents of the local area, such as those of Milton Road. Therefore it is envisaged that many of the members would be able to walk/jog/cycle to and from the facility, thus reducing the number of cars that actually visit the unit on a daily basis.

3. As with any other form of exercise, a CrossFit facility would see music being played during classes. However, the 'instructor-led' nature of CrossFit classes mean that the instructor must be able to be heard above the music at all times, in order to provide coaching cues to the members. Therefore the continuous playing of loud, pumping music associated with modern gyms (which it is acknowledged would disturb the residents) will not occur at this facility.

4. It is common practice to lay thick rubber matting on the floor of gymnasiums to protect the floor of the unit, the members should they trip or fall, and the equipment should it be dropped. CrossFit does involve the use of Barbells and Kettlebells and there are some occasions when a lift is missed that a weight must be dropped in order to prevent injury to the athlete. The rubber matting laid for the reasons explained above will also serve to dampen the noise made by the dropping of weights, should it occur.

The partners fully understand the concerns of the local residents, and welcome this opportunity to open a dialogue in order to address those concerns. There will undoubtedly be the occasional shout of encouragement from a coach, a celebratory cheer from an individual or class when a new member achieves something which they previously thought impossible, or the dull thud of a weight being dropped as a member fails a lift, but these do not constitute the levels of disturbance and noise pollution outlined in the objection. CrossFit has made an extremely positive impact upon the lives of all the partners and they are passionate about passing this on to other members of the Waterloo community. The partners hope this response has sufficiently addressed the concerns of the residents of Milton Road and would be happy to welcome any of them to view the facility once it is open (pending receipt of change of use consent).