

APP/24/00303 - Objection to use of proposed extension at Northney Marina as a gymnasium

The Northney Marina Berthholders' Association (NMBHA) raises the following objections to this application.

1. Background

The original application (APP/23/00469) by MDL for an extension to the marina office at Northney Marina made no mention of a gymnasium at Northney Marina. The subsequent Decision Notice approving the extension specifically requires retention of marine-related services and defines these as follows:

Havant Decision Notice

'Notwithstanding the provisions of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) the development hereby permitted shall be used solely for marine related uses as set out below and for no other purpose without agreement in writing by the Local Planning Authority: (a) Boat Sales/Brokerage · Boat Sales, Charter/Rental and Agency Management · Insurance/Finance services · Boat Servicing/Valeting (b) Instruction · Specialist training, Sailing Schools · Marine Inspection/Surveying and Marina Safety generally, including related equipment provision and maintenance (c) Boat Owner Services · General Chandlery supplies including clothing · Specialist services installations · Boat transfer/handling and maintenance management · Specialist operatives (e.g. Communications/Navigation) without workshop requirements Reason: To ensure that uses are compatible with and complementary to the existing use of the site and to prevent unsustainable non-marine uses at the site having due regard to policies CS17, CS20 and DM9 of the Havant Borough Local Plan (Core Strategy) 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework.'

2. Current application

APP/24/00303 | Variation of Condition 5 of APP/23/00469 to allow use of Unit 3 as a gymnasium

As Havant's revised Local Plan is incomplete at this stage, the provisions of the existing plan still carry considerable weight and Havant must remain committed to protection of marine services and support for the important marine industry in the Solent area. A small gymnasium cannot reasonably be described as 'marine-related' in any way and introduces inappropriate environmental, traffic and security issues to this site in an important conservation area.

Latest proposal

The description of the latest proposal on behalf of MDL says only that 'Single storey extension to existing Marina Services Building including solar panels (Amendment to Planning Permission APP/22/00479) and alterations to existing car park.' The accompanying Planning statement is a little more explanatory and NMBHA makes the following comments in response.

On behalf of MDL, the application states that 'The applicant has been successfully operating a gym, MDL Fitness, at Plymouth Marina and are seeking to replicate this business model at Northney Marina'.

NMBHA: The implied comparison of these two developments is highly inappropriate; the Plymouth site is a very different, very much larger scale operation – see <https://www.mdlmarinas.co.uk/mdl-fitness/>

NMBHA: Further, there is already a well-established, much larger and fully equipped gym just yards away from Northney Marina at The Langstone Hotel (although even that is not always fully

used). The case for a small 24- hour gymnasium, with limited facilities, on this restricted marina site seems unproven. It is difficult to see how this application can be commercially justified, especially as there are, additionally, many other small-scale establishments throughout the area.

The MDL application states 'The Council's emerging Local Plan was withdrawn further to the Inspectors recommendation, and therefore is in very early stage of preparation, and therefore carries very little weight.'

NMBHA: This seems a very inappropriate statement not least because Havant's protection of its marine industry is not enhanced by this application. The Berthholders' Association has seen several marine businesses based at Northney Marina have their tenancies terminated in the last couple of years.

Further, this is the leading marine cluster in the whole UK. The Solent Local Enterprise Partnership has noted that 'The Solent's marine and maritime sector is one of our largest and most productive sectors, accounting for 20.5% of Solent's GVA, providing 40,000 jobs locally, and supporting more than 3,000 businesses. Over the period to 2025, the marine and maritime sector in the Solent region is forecast to grow by at least 5%.'

3. NMBHA comments on related parking issues, traffic and access, and security

There are also important additional reasons for asking Havant to refuse this application:

Parking Even during relatively 'off peak' sailing months, boat maintenance is ongoing and parking for boat owners in the allocated area at Northney marina becomes extremely busy. Boats parked ashore in the car park and failure of lift-in/lift-out capacity have caused considerable difficulties and complaints in the very recent past, which MDL acknowledges were entirely justified.

Seemingly, 150 car spaces will be retained even though 16 spaces are being removed. Further pressure on parking spaces will exacerbate problems when many boats are brought ashore during late autumn, winter and early spring months. Where will any such additional visitors park? If permitted to park in the berthholders' car park, this would be a clear violation of current allocations.

Security Although the site is, indeed, privately owned, public access is permitted at all times and the application is, surprisingly, for a 24-hour gym. This presents significant security risks to the valuable boats in the marina (228 berths), which have been the subject of thefts and damage in the recent past. It is unclear what additional resources are to be deployed to prevent security breaches.

Traffic & access. The Transport report was done on a Wednesday (March 20th 2024), when only a very few cars came in and out of the site. Perhaps misleadingly, all the applicants' calculations are based on this. Access to and from Northney Road onto the main road can also be difficult anyway and access to/from the island can become gridlocked. The single access/exit to or from Hayling Island presents considerable risks in the case of any emergency.

Health & safety for gym users Somewhat ironically, gymnasiums are known for being the source of many injuries. For a 24-hour operation, the proposed fully-trained staffing levels for specialist equipment seem inadequate. It is highly inappropriate to ask unqualified staff to provide any sort of supervision of sessions being undertaken, even if of only a single person, whilst marina staff are also exceedingly stretched at times.

It is claimed that the gym will benefit the community and 'tourism'. If this application is permitted, surely users should be 'members only' to ensure users are assessed or Health and Safety will be greatly compromised.

MDL also comments that:

MDL - (CSLP) 3.3 This plan (original Local Plan presumably?) was adopted prior to the NPPF 2012, and therefore in many respects is out-of-date and fails to acknowledge the guidance within the NPPF 2021 and the need to place significant weight supporting economic growth taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. (my italics).

MDL - Policy CS2 Employment This policy confirms that planning permission will be granted for proposals that (inter alia) prioritises the use of previously developed for new employment space; promotes existing business clusters and sectors particularly advanced manufacturing and marine businesses.

NMBHA response: The removal of marine related businesses at Northney marina, (mentioned above) is a very clear indication that MDL does not appear to respect economic development and associated skills in the important marine industry in the Solent.

MDL - Policy CS5 Tourism This policy provides support to the improvement of existing tourism facilities such as Northney Marina and advises that planning permission will be granted for “appropriate development proposals”.

NMBHA: There is no clear benefit to tourism provided by a small gymnasium, especially when there is already much larger provision available just yards away at the Langstone, including a swimming pool. The commercial case for this use has yet to be made.

Policy DM10 Pollution – Development that may cause pollution will only be permitted where it would not impact neighbouring residents.

NMBHA: Lighting and noise pollution are significant problems in the AONB and ‘neighbouring residents’ in this case include near-by boat occupiers; boats are often used for sleeping on board.

Summary

This proposal is a disservice to marina berth holders at Northney: significant reduction of facilities, parking, security threats, 24-hour noise and disturbance and, and worsens already difficult – sometimes dangerous - access from and to the main road access by Hayling bridge.

We cannot see how this enhances the AONB or the conservation area or adds anything at all to berth holders’ day-to-day facilities at the marina. Will ‘non- berth holders’ have access to showers and toilets? First thing in the morning (for the pre-work gym users) is ‘rush hour’ in the showers and mid-evening is another ‘rush hour’ (the post-work gym users). This proposal is to the overall significant detriment of berth holders.

This application is also contrary to Havant’s ongoing commitment to protection of marine-related businesses; several have been expelled from the site in the past couple of years, which is also to the detriment of the local economy of Hayling Island. Economic growth by possible employment in a small gym is more than outweighed by this loss of several marina service businesses at Northney in the past couple of years.

We ask that Havant Planning Authority refuse this application.



Chairman, NMBHA