

# Forest Heath District Council

**DEVELOPMENT  
CONTROL  
COMMITTEE**

**3 SEPTEMBER 2014**

**DEV14/132**

**Report of the Head of Planning and Regulatory  
Services**

**PLANNING APPLICATION DC/14/1289/R4LA – FOREST HEATH DISTRICT  
COUNCIL, COLLEGE HEATH ROAD, MILDENHALL**

## **Synopsis:**

Application under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and associated matters.

## **Recommendation:**

**It is recommended that the Committee determine the attached application and associated matters.**

## **CONTACT OFFICER**

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# Committee Report DC/14/1289/R4LA

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**Date** 11 July 2014 **Expiry Date:** 5 September 2014  
**Registered:**

**Case** Charlotte **Recommendation:** Approve

**Officer:** Ballard

**Parish:** Mildenhall **Ward:** Market

**Proposal:** Conversion of part of office space (Class B1) to fitness gym and dance studio (Class D2)

**Site:** Forest Heath District Council, College Heath Road, Mildenhall

**Applicant:** Abbeycroft and Anglia Community Leisure

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## **Background:**

**This application is referred to Development Control Committee due to the Local Authority's ownership of the site.**

## **Proposal:**

1. Planning permission is sought for the change of use of an area of office space within the District Council building to a gym and dance studio. The area comprises a ground floor wing to the west of the building which is largely redundant. The facility would include a gym, dance/fitness studio, male, female and accessible changing rooms.
2. The facility would be accessed via the existing fire exit door on the western elevation facing College Heath Road. In addition, air conditioning units to serve the gym and dance studio are proposed to be sited on the roof of the building. No other external changes are proposed. Vehicular and cycle parking for the facility is proposed to the south of the building.

## **Application Supporting Material:**

3. Information submitted with the application as follows:
  - Existing and Proposed plans
  - Supporting statement
  - Car parking plan
  - Air conditioning specification
  - Acoustic report

**Site Details:**

4. The District Offices are bounded on two sides by College Heath Road, the western wing is the subject of this application which faces the highway and adjacent housing at Peterhouse Close. The single storey wing is built of red brick with glazing on both side elevations.

**Planning History:**

5. None relevant.

**Consultations:**

6. Highway Authority: No objection.
7. Environmental Health Officer: No objection subject to conditions.

**Representations:**

8. Mildenhall Parish Council: Support the application.
9. Stuart Harrison on behalf of the Disability Forum: Fully supports the principle of development but has made suggestions regarding the internal layout to provide improved facilities for wheelchair users.

**Policy:** The following policies of the Forest Heath Core Strategy (May 2010) and the saved policies of the Forest Heath Local Plan (1994) have been taken into account in the consideration of this application:

10. Forest Heath Core Strategy (May 2010):
  - Policy CS1: Spatial Strategy
  - Policy CS5: Design Quality and Local Distinctiveness
11. Forest Heath Local Plan (1995)
  - Saved Policy 3.1: Settlement Policy

**Other Planning Policy:**

12. National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

**Officer Comment:**

13. The application has been submitted in conjunction with the ongoing Mildenhall Hub partnership project. Essentially this project seeks to relocate the District Council Offices, Mildenhall College, The Dome and Mildenhall swimming pool onto a single public service site. At present this plan is still at the fairly early stages.
14. The Dome which currently accommodates a gym, sports hall and various dance and fitness studios is considered, due to its age and design, no longer suitable. Improvement and refurbishment is not economically

viable and its replacement is the favoured solution. It is envisaged that a new facility would be provided as part of the Hub project, however, a more immediate alternative is required in the interim period.

15. In order to maintain access to sports facilities, the proposed exit strategy from the Dome involves the replacement of the gym and a single dance studio at the Council offices prior to the development of a replacement site. This would protect much of the facilities for users, enabling residents to maintain access to sport and leisure in Mildenhall as well as retaining the existing customer base. During this temporary period the facilities provided at College Heath Road would be open to the public between 7:00 – 22:00 Monday – Friday and 08:00 – 16:00 Saturdays. In addition, some facilities at the Dome would be available during the day to customers and Mildenhall College.
16. In principle the use of the site for a gym facility is considered acceptable and is supported by the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework which seeks to encourage community facilities. The site is located close to the town centre, where sustainable modes of travel are available. At present there is capacity within the Council Offices to accommodate the facility and this proposal would provide an efficient use of the space.
17. Air conditioning units are proposed on the roof of the existing single storey building. This section of roof already accommodates various plant and photovoltaic panels and due to the surrounding parapet wall visibility of such is limited. This is considered to be the most appropriate location for these units where they will have a minimal impact on the appearance of the area.
18. The application indicates that a new internal wall will be erected between the staff offices and the proposed gym and this will provide both an acoustic and fire barrier. Additionally, a set of double doors will be provided at the internal entrance to the facility providing a lobby area. The acoustic assessment has considered the impact of the use as well as the air conditioning units on both residents living opposite in Peterhouse Close as well as existing Local Authority staff. The assessment concludes that the noise created by the facility and the plant will not create a disturbance to staff or adjacent residents. The Environmental Health Officer is satisfied with the findings of the report and has recommended appropriate conditions.
19. Currently, parking to the south of the building is reserved for staff and visitors. The application indicates that this area would be re-designated to accommodate visitors to the Council Offices and to the gym. 51 vehicular spaces are included within this car park and the Highways Authority is satisfied that sufficient parking is available within the site to serve the new use as well as existing staff.
20. The temporary change of use proposed will lead to a greater number of visitors to the College Heath site. However, due to its location, close to the town centre and bus routes as well as the available vehicle and cycle

parking within the site this is considered acceptable. Relocation of the gym facilities will be of benefit to the community and is not considered to result in a loss of amenity by reason of noise, excess parking or disturbance.

**Conclusion:**

21. In conclusion, the principle and detail of the development is considered to be acceptable and in compliance with relevant development plan policies and the National Planning Policy Framework.

**Recommendation:**

22. It is **RECOMMENDED** that planning permission be **Approved** subject to the following conditions:

1. Development to be implemented within 3 years.
2. Fixed plant installed shall not exceed an environmental noise limit of 30 dB (A) following the guidance of BS 4142: 1997.
3. The internal lobby and acoustic barrier shown on the layout 2086/L1 of the survey report shall be provided prior to the use becoming operational. These measures should provide at least 45 dB separation between the two areas, reducing levels of up to 75 dB (A) in the gym to no more than 30 dB (A) in the adjacent offices.
4. Noise levels of up to around 90 dB (A) inside the new facility should not exceed 30 dB (A) both outside the nearby residential dwellings and also inside the adjacent offices.
5. Vehicular and cycle parking shown on submitted plan to be available prior to use commencing.
6. Hours of operation limited to 07:00 – 22:00 Monday – Friday and 08:00 – 16:00 Saturdays.
7. Development in accordance with approved plans.

**Documents:**

All background documents including application forms, drawings and other supporting documentation relating to this application can be viewed online:

<http://planning.stedmundsbury.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=N8JMX3PD03E00>

Alternatively, hard copies are also available to view at Planning, Planning and Regulatory Services, Forest Heath District Council, District Offices, College Heath Road, Mildenhall, Suffolk, IP28 7EY