

RPS

Planning Statement

In respect of

The Gym
The Old Heating Station
Coram Street
London
WC1N 1HB

On behalf of

The Gym Limited

RPS Ref: JCG23270

September 2018

Secure & Stable
ADDING VALUE

QUALITY MANAGEMENT

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Gym Ltd (“the Applicant”) are proposing to continue to operate the existing D2 facility within the single storey basement unit at The Old Heating Station, Coram Street, WC1N 1HB (“the Site”), located within the London Borough of Camden, on a 24 hour / 7 day a week basis.
- 1.2 The Gym took over the operation of the premises from Fitness First in 2017, in order to maintain a leisure facility in the centre. Planning permission 2017/3697/P was granted in December 2017 for a temporary period of 12 months to enable a 24 hour / 7 day a week operation of the unit. This use has been in operation since December 2017 and has operated without undue impact on the local amenities or neighbouring properties.
- 1.3 The Gym Group has built a successful business model operating 24 hour health and fitness uses, and therefore, has considerable experience in ensuring that their units operate efficiently and without disruption. The Gym are an experienced operator with over 130 gyms operating across the country at present, including premises in Birmingham, Cardiff, Glasgow, Leicester, Liverpool, Manchester, Nottingham and Sheffield, and 26 premises in London, including operations within residential buildings in Angel, Colindale, Stockwell, and West Hampstead.
- 1.4 The Gym aims to increase access to health and fitness activities to a wide demographic to encourage and improve health by providing a low cost and flexible gym membership option. The Gym provides a high quality but cheaper option for health and fitness activity, with 24hr opening hours providing flexibility for its customers.
- 1.5 The Gym provides a health and fitness use which is aimed at a different market to the current offer typically within the area. The Gym aims to increase access to health and fitness activities to a wide demographic to encourage improved health by providing a low cost and flexible option. On average 35% of The Gym’s members have not been to a gym before, with The Gym attempting to provide its facilities to a much wider market.
- 1.6 Membership of The Gym is at low cost, with no minimum contract period. As such members can join for just a single month, or have a break within their membership at nominal cost. The Gym opens on a 24 hour basis to ensure flexibility of use by its members, whilst of critical importance is ensuring that the amenity of surrounding occupiers is not unduly affected.
- 1.7 This Planning Statement sets out the site and surrounding area, the planning history of the site, the key planning policies which the proposed development needs to be considered against and the planning considerations of the application.
- 1.8 A letter has been produced by Clarke Saunders Acoustics in support of the planning application and should be read in conjunction with the supporting plans.

2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

- 2.1 The site is comprised of a single storey metal framed 'Pavilion' structure with glazed elevations, located at the eastern end of a strip of land surrounded by Coram Street to the north, Herbrand Street to the west, Marchmont Street to the east and the access road to the Bloomsbury Hotel to the south. It provides pedestrian access from street level to the basement, where the gym itself is located.
- 2.2 The gym is a car free development although car parking within the area, associated with the site is located adjacent to the north, with an NCP car park on Brunswick Square at the rear of the site, which serves a number of facilities in the local area.
- 2.3 The surrounding area contains a mix of residential and commercial/employment uses. The site is not located within a Town Centre but is located within the Central London Area, with a number of surrounding buildings comprising commercial uses at ground floor level, with a mix of uses above.
- 2.4 In terms of accessibility, the site has a Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) of 6b (Excellent), and is readily accessible by a variety of public transport modes, providing easy and quick access from around the surrounding area to and from the site. This includes Russell Square Underground Station and London Euston Station within 5 minutes walking distance of the site.

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 As detailed on Camden Council's online planning search, the Site has been subject of a number of planning applications relating to the use and hours of operation. The most relevant applications to this current proposal have been outlined in the table below.

Application Ref.	Description of Development	Decision and Date
2017/3697/P	Removal of condition 1 (hours of operation) of planning permission PS9704920R2 dated 17/04/1998 as varied by planning permission PSX0104075 dated 13/03/2001 and planning permission 2015/4176/P dated 28/10/2015 (Change of use to a gym) to allow the temporary 12 months 24-hour use of the premises 7 days a week.	Granted - 04/12/2017
2015/4176/P	Temporary removal of condition 1 (hours of operation) of planning permission PS9704920R2 dated 17/04/1998 as varied by planning permission PSX0104075 to allow 24-hour use of the premises for a period of 12 months.	Granted - 28/10/2015
PSX0104075	Variation of condition 1 of planning permission (ref. No. PS9704920R2) to extend the hours of operation as follow; 06.00 hours to 23.00 hours Monday to Friday, 07.00 hours to 22.00 hours Saturday and 08.00 hours to 22.00 hours Sundays and Bank Holidays'.	Granted - 13/03/2001
PS9704920R2	Change of use from heating station to health and fitness club, and the erection of a glazed pavilion.	Granted - 17/04/1998

3.2 The previous two planning permissions on the site (2017/3697/P and 2015/4176/P) have granted 24 hour use of the facility for a temporary period of 12 months, in order to enable the Council to assess the impact of such a use upon the amenities of neighbours and the wider area.

3.3 The proposed development, discussed in greater detail in the section below, proposes the removal of condition 1 of the original planning permission and subsequent variation of condition applications. This is to enable the continued operation of 'The Gym' facility 24 hours a day on a permanent basis.

4.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The application proposes the variation of existing conditions to enable The Gym to operate the basement unit for 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The description of development is therefore detailed below:

“Removal of condition 1 (hours of operation) of planning permission PS9704920R2 dated 17/04/1998, as varied by planning permission PSX0104075 dated 13/03/2001, planning permission 2015/4176/P dated 28/10/2015 and planning permission 2017/3697/P dated 04/12/2017, to allow for a 24 hour, 7 days a week operation of the gym unit.”

- 4.2 Following the successful variation of condition 1 of planning permission 2017/3697/P, the gym use was allowed to operate on a 24-hour basis for a temporary period of 12 months.
- 4.3 As the temporary planning permission now expires on 4 December 2018, a new application is being submitted to ensure that the current site operations continue to operate from the premises on a permanent basis and ensure that there are no restrictions on its use.
- 4.4 The Gym aims to increase access to health and fitness activities to a wide demographic to encourage improved health by providing a low cost and flexible gym membership option. The extended hours will provide appropriate flexibility for members and encourage greater activity and fitness within this accessible London location within the CAZ.
- 4.5 The Gym provides a high quality but lower cost option for health and fitness activity. A key component of The Gym’s operation and offer to its members are its opening hours and the flexibility which they allow to members.
- 4.6 The Gym’s operations include a range of cardio-vascular (rowing, running, cycling, etc.) and resistance (weights) equipment for individual use. No studios or dance floor areas will be provided. As such there are no intensive activities undertaken as part of the operation and music will be limited to provide controlled low-level background music only.

5.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires development proposals to be determined in accordance with the statutory Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.2 In this instance, the Development Plan consists of:

- The London Plan (2016);
- Camden Local Plan (2017);
- Adopted Site Allocations Plan (2013);
- Policies Map (2018).

5.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are to be applied, and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) are also material considerations.

5.4 The following section sets out the relevant planning policy context to which the proposal should be assessed against.

National Planning Policy Framework (2018)

5.5 The NPPF includes a requirement on local planning authorities to plan positively for growth and states that *"It is important that needs for retail, leisure, office and other main town centre uses are met in full and are not compromised by limited site availability"*. Moreover *"planning policies should aim for a balance of land uses within their area so that people can be encouraged to minimise journey lengths for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities"*.

The London Plan (2016)

5.6 At the regional level of planning policy, the Greater London Authority (GLA) adopted the London Plan Consolidated within Alterations in March 2016 which forms part of the Development Plan for Camden.

5.7 The relevant policies of the London Plan are:

- 3.2 – Improving health and addressing health inequalities
- 7.1 – Lifetime neighbourhoods
- 7.4 – Local Character
- 7.15 – Reducing and managing noise, improving and enhancing the acoustic environment and promoting appropriate soundscapes

Camden Local Plan (2017)

- 5.8 The London Borough of Camden's Local Plan was adopted in 2017 and replaced the Core Strategy and Development Policies.
- 5.9 The Camden Local Plan sets out a range of planning policies for managing development across the borough. The policies relevant to the proposed development are:
- Policy G1 – Delivery and location of growth
 - Policy C1 – Health and wellbeing
 - Policy C3 – Cultural and leisure facilities
 - Policy A1 – Managing the impact of development
 - Policy A4 – Noise and vibration
 - Policy T1 – Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport
 - Policy T2 – Parking and car-free development

6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 In this section, consideration is given to the key issues raised by the scheme in relation to the planning policy context under the following headings:

- Principle of use
- Design and appearance
- Residential amenity
- Premises security
- Transport matters

Principle of use

6.2 The fitness / gym use of the basement unit is already established, given the previous planning permissions on the site. This current application seeks to extend operating hours of the premises in line with the 2015 and 2017 planning permissions granted for 24 hours use of this premises.

6.3 In planning policy terms, Policy G1 states 'the council will create the conditions for growth to deliver the infrastructure and facilities to meet Camden's identified needs and harness the benefits for those who live and work in the borough'. Policy C3 states that 'the council will protect cultural and leisure facilities valued by the community'.

6.4 The Gym aims to reach a different market than conventional operators. This is seen in the type of offer it provides, mainly through weights and cardio vascular machines, rather than organised group fitness, and through the membership and cost structure, providing a lower cost option. As such they have found that it provides a valuable resource and source of exercise/fitness for a range of local people, including those who do not work 'regular' 9-5 jobs, which is becoming increasingly common, especially in this central urban location.

6.5 The nature of the economy is changing, whereby the previous rigid patterns of employment are more fluid and flexible, and The Gym have therefore witnessed demand for flexibility in their operation to cater for a wider demographic across all of their existing operations. As such whilst the majority of members utilise The Gym during the day, increased access has become a key element of The Gym's operation and this flexibility in opening hours is particularly important for those who work on a shift basis, including doctors, nurses, ambulance, police, fire and other workers.

6.6 As a result The Gym have developed a detailed and comprehensive strategy in relation to their increased opening hours to ensure that there is no unacceptable impact on surrounding occupiers, either through the operation itself or members arriving at and leaving the site. This has been successfully rolled out across all existing The Gym operations to ensure there is no detrimental impact on the local environment or amenity.

6.7 The principle of the use is therefore supported.

Design and appearance

- 6.8 The proposal, for the variation of conditions to extend the hours of use of the existing basement unit will not result in any external changes to the existing unit. As such, there would be no impact upon the existing visual character of the area. The proposal would be acceptable in this regard.
- 6.9 The necessary advertisement consent for The Gym has already been approved.

Residential amenity

- 6.10 The proposals would not result in any increase in built form or footprint, and in this regard there would be no additional impact upon the amenities of adjoining neighbouring properties in terms of any additional overbearing effects or any loss of light or outlook. The key consideration of the application is the potential noise impact of the 24 hour operation of the gym.
- 6.11 Policy A1 states that the Council will seek to protect the quality of life of occupiers and neighbours. Policy A4 states outlines that the Council will seek to ensure that noise and vibration is controlled and managed and goes on to say that permission for noise generating development, including any plant and machinery, will only be granted if it can be operated without causing harm to amenity. Policy 7.15 of the London Plan requires that proposals avoid significant adverse noise impacts upon health and quality of life, and proposals should also mitigate and minimise the potential adverse impacts of noise.
- 6.12 The current proposal seeks to permanently extend the 24 hour operation of the site, in line with the previous temporary planning approvals granted in 2015 and 2017. As such, a major consideration of this application would be the potential for noise impact of these extended hours upon the amenities of adjoining occupiers as this was the Council's reasoning behind previously granting temporary consents for 24 hour uses.
- 6.13 Following the granting of planning permission 2017/3697/P, the 24hr use has been operational since December 2017 and there have been no undue impacts with this current operation. Permission was granted for a temporary period of 12 months, in order for the Council to assess the potential noise impacts associated with the extended hours of operation, which is the main consideration for the current application submission.
- 6.14 The management measures in place for the building and the building fit out specification ensure that there are no unacceptable impacts in terms of noise on adjoining and surrounding occupiers or the local environment. Providing a high level of security throughout the operation is a principle objective of The Gym. Maintaining a friendly and welcoming environment and deterring any anti-social behaviour is a priority to both the Gym Group and to its members.
- 6.15 Furthermore, from an assessment of visitors to other similar operations around the country and the scale and nature of the operation proposed, only 9.29% of visits are made between the hours of 23:00 and 06:00, with very minimal attendance between 00:00 and 06:00. Due to the nature of the gym use members attending between these hours tend to do so on an individual basis, rather than as part of groups, and comprises those working shifts, such as emergency service personnel. As such the potential for any impact in terms of noise and disturbance during these hours is limited and the extended hours of operation of the unit would not result in additional harm to the amenities of adjoining neighbouring or surrounding properties.

- 6.16 In terms of the operation of the gym facility itself, audio / visual equipment is placed on anti-vibration mounts, with volume limiters on all equipment to restrict sound to an acceptable level. The volume limiter is kept in a secure area of the gym to ensure that this cannot be interfered with. Audio / visual equipment in the gym is limited to a small number of units which are located around the building to avoid hotspots of noise. These are kept to a minimum noise level, enabling members to utilise personal MP3 players.
- 6.17 This planning application submission is supported by information from Clarke Saunders Acoustics, which provides an assessment on the suitability of the premises for the extended operational hours of the basement unit of The Gym.
- 6.18 The letter confirms the basement use of as a gym is considered to be suitable for 24 hour health and fitness use. It confirms that the detail on design and operational considerations throughout the 24hr opening hours will ensure appropriate operation without impact on the amenities of surrounding occupiers or local environment. The measures include:
- The premises are completely underground, with the only adjacent structures being below ground restricting the opportunity for noise and vibrational impacts on neighbours.
 - The layout of the gym facilities and equipment is intended to assist the control of noise and vibration transmission to the neighbouring hotel and street.
 - Free weights are located at a lower level and are fitted with a suitable floor system to minimise impact.
 - Coached classes only take place during daytime working hours (no earlier than 7am and no later than 9pm) in functional areas.
 - Changing rooms and functional areas are placed at upper levels and will generate lower levels of noise.
 - Existing plant and ventilation equipment is being retained, with no additional plant.
- 6.19 Given the nature of the operation, the management controls and mitigation measures employed by The Gym, the proposed use of the premises on an extended hours basis, would not have a detrimental impact on the amenity of residents within the surrounding area. The Gym are a considerate and conscientious operator who rely on the local population for a considerable element of their membership and as such take their responsibility to the local environment and surrounding occupiers very seriously to ensure that disturbance does not occur at any hour of the day or night.
- 6.20 The Gym has experience of providing 24 hour health and fitness uses in similar locations to the application site, including within residential buildings in Angel and West Hampstead. Due to the proposed nature of the operation, the proposed insulation and control measures to be incorporated, as set out below, it is considered that the proposed use on a 24 hour basis would not have an unacceptable impact on the amenities of surrounding occupiers or the environment within the local area.
- 6.21 Maintaining a friendly and welcoming environment and deterring any anti-social behaviour is a priority to both the Gym Group and to its members. The Gym Group successfully operate on a 24

hour basis utilising this well tested system and have an exemplary safety record across all existing operational Gyms in the UK. This includes the operation of 24 hour premises adjacent to and in close proximity to residential properties, as well as 24 hour units within many residential buildings. The established operation and management measures set out will ensure a safe environment without an unacceptable impact on local amenity.

- 6.22 Overall the nature of the operation, together with the mitigation and management measures, and the existing building specification will ensure that there continues to be no unacceptable impacts on adjoining and surrounding occupiers or the local environment. As such the proposal complies with Policy 7.15 of the London Plan and Policies A1 and A4 of the Camden Local Plan.

Premises security

- 6.23 Ensuring that a high level of security is provided throughout the operation is a principle objective of The Gym. Maintaining a friendly and welcoming environment and deterring any anti-social behaviour is a priority of both The Gym and to its members.
- 6.24 Access to the property is strictly controlled. Between the hours of 8am and 8pm the front door of the premises will be open and access will be afforded to the lobby. At this point a two door portal will be in operation which requires a personal entry code to be entered into a key pad and restricts access to one person at a time only. The pin code enables The Gym to record attendance within the premises. These full height glazed partitions and portals also provide a barrier to noise transmitting from the main body of the gym via the accesses.
- 6.25 Free standing computer terminals within the entrance area of the premises enable people to join up to The Gym or to manage any issues relating to existing membership and entry. Call points are located externally to enable any users to address issues directly.
- 6.26 Between 8pm and 8am the main front entrance door is locked and again pin code input is required to gain access to the premises to restrict access to the entire premises to members of The Gym only outside of core hours.
- 6.27 An extensive network of CCTV cameras will operate throughout the premises providing coverage of all internal areas and external entrances. This CCTV will be monitored on a 24 hour a day basis through a remote monitoring system enabling operatives to identify and react to potential issues immediately and this approach was considered acceptable within the previous application on the site.

Transport matters

- 6.28 The existing gym unit is located in an area of excellent accessibility for public transport, a PTAL rating of 6b, and there is an NCP car park facility located to the north (rear) of the site. The Gym attracts clientele which are usually based locally, and are likely to go to the gym on foot and by public transport.
- 6.29 The majority of trips are undertaken as linked trips either on their way to and from home or work, or as part of utilising other services and facilities within the area.

- 6.30 The gym operation is designed as a local use, focused on those within the immediate surrounding community. They are located in urban areas where the membership for the use is drawn from a local catchment. Access to The Gym by foot and public transport is therefore encouraged.
- 6.31 The use will result in minimal deliveries and servicing as the use generates minimal waste and the deliveries are limited to minimal vending products.
- 6.32 Given the low number of additional visits that are likely to be made to the unit during the extended hours opening hours, it is considered that the continued extended opening hours would not result in any parking or transport issues.

7.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 This planning statement is submitted on behalf of The Gym Ltd in support of the application which proposes the variation of existing conditions to enable The Gym to continue to operate the basement unit for 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The description of development is:
- “Removal of condition 1 (hours of operation) of planning permission PS9704920R2 dated 17/04/1998, as varied by planning permission PSX0104075 dated 13/03/2001, planning permission 2015/4176/P dated 28/10/2015 and planning permission 2017/3697/P dated 04/12/2017, to allow for a 24 hour, 7 days a week operation of the gym unit.”*
- 7.2 Following the granting of planning permission 2017/3697/P, the 24hr use has been operational since December 2017 and there have been no undue impact with this current operation. Permission was granted for a temporary period of 12 months, in order for the Council to assess the potential noise impacts associated with the extended hours of operation, which is the main consideration for the current application submission.
- 7.3 The management measures in place for the building and the building fit out specification ensure that there are no unacceptable impacts in terms of noise on adjoining and surrounding occupiers or the local environment. Providing a high level of security throughout the operation is a principle objective of The Gym. Maintaining a friendly and welcoming environment and deterring any anti-social behaviour is a priority to both the Gym Group and to its members.
- 7.4 Clarke Saunders Acoustics have confirmed that the proposal will not result in any unacceptable impact on the amenity of surrounding occupiers or the local environment, and include details of the measures to be incorporated within the current fit out.
- 7.5 The Gym Group successfully operate premises across the country on a 24 hour basis and utilising this well tested system in all locations. The Gym Group have an exemplary safety record across all existing Gyms in the UK. Therefore the operation and management of the premises will ensure a safe environment without an unacceptable impact on local neighbouring amenity.
- 7.6 This planning statement has considered that the proposed extended hours of operation of the unit will, as a result of the mitigation measures proposed, continue to not have any unacceptable impact on the amenities of the adjacent residents by way of noise or disturbance.
- 7.7 The proposal is in compliance with the Development Plan and we therefore respectfully request that the Council grant consent for the removal of condition as proposed.