



ET Planning

Planning Statement

Client:

Estama (UK)

Aberafan Shopping Centre

Port Talbot SA13 1PB

Change of use to gym

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is produced to support a planning application for the change of use of the Former Wilkos to a Gym at Unit 2, Aberafan Shopping Centre, Port Talbot, SA13 1PB.
- 1.2 This planning statement will cover the background to the application and provide the necessary information to enable its determination by officers at the Council. It will consider the proposal in light of relevant planning policies and other material considerations. The conclusion reached is that key material considerations and the wider objectives of National and Local planning policy support the grant of permission.
- 1.3 In addition to this planning statement, the application is accompanied by the appropriate planning application forms and ownership certificate, duly signed and completed, and the following documents prepared by Monte Calvo Architects, John Russell Transport Planning, Foundry Gym and ACA Acoustics Consultants:
- 1:1250 Site Location Plan
 - 1:500 Existing Block Plan
 - 1:100 Proposed First Floor Plan
 - 1:100 Existing First Floor Plan
 - Transport Statement
 - Noise Impact Assessment
 - Business Plan
- 1.4 The relevant application fee will be submitted by the applicant separately.

2. Site Location and Description

- 2.1 The proposal site comprises the first floor of Aberafan Shopping Centre, specifically the former Wilko store which has been vacant since the chain's closure.
- 2.2 The Shopping Centre itself lies within the defined Town Centre under Local Plan Policy R2/1.
- 2.3 The Shopping Centre is located off the Junction 41 of the M4, bound by the A48 south, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Offices to the north, the train line to the west and the River Afan to the east.
- 2.4 The site is also in close proximity to Port Talbot Multi-Storey Car Park, Port Talbot Parkway Railway Station and Port Talbot Bus Station.

3. Planning History

- 3.1 Application Ref: P2010/0958 – Creation of additional retail floor space (A1) at first-floor level involving the construction of a new flat-roof. Approved 8 November 2010.

4. Development Proposals

- 4.1 **Use and Amount:** The proposed use is for a gym. No changes are proposed to the gross floor area.
- 4.2 **Layout and Scale:** The proposed development will occur within the confines of the existing built form.
- 4.3 **Scale Height & Mass:** The proposal does not seek for any changes to the existing floorspace and will make use of the former Wilko unit.
- 4.4 **Landscaping:** No soft landscaping is proposed owing to the site's first floor location within the town centre. The proposed development

will utilise the existing landscape features that exist within the shopping centre more widely.

- 4.5 **Appearance:** No external changes are proposed as part of the development.
- 4.6 **Access & Parking:** Access and parking arrangements will remain as existing.
- 4.7 The application is submitted by the Foundry Gym Franchise who create contemporary gyms, having successfully opened gyms in 20 locations and continuing their expansion at a rapid rate.
- 4.8 The Foundry Gym Franchise seek to provide a thriving 24 hour fitness facility to promote physical and mental well-being in the Port Talbot area, offering a flagship franchise in the Wales region. A Business Plan prepared by Mr David Perry is submitted alongside this application.

5. Policy Assessment

5.1 **Principle of Development:** Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this instance, the relevant Development Plan documents include:

- Planning Policy Wales (Edition 11) (2021) (PPW)
- Future Wales – The National Plan 2040 (2020) (FW)
- Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Local Development Plan (2011-2026) (2016) (LDP)

5.2 Policy SC1 states that development within settlement limits that is proportionate in scale and form to the role and function of the settlement as set out in the Settlement Hierarchy will be acceptable in principle. The policy subtext goes further to state that proposals which will attract or accommodate significant numbers of people are only likely to be acceptable in larger centres or towns where there are adequate facilities and transport infrastructure.

5.3 The LDP Settlement Hierarchy identifies Port Talbot to be a regionally important settlement which provides the widest and most diverse of functions. Located on the strategic road network, the town is fully accessible by a range of transport options.

5.4 Policy R2 – Proposals within Retail Centres of the LDP states that within the designated retail centres, uses that would enhance the vitality, viability and attractiveness of the centre, including uses in classes A and D will be permitted where:

- a) *The proposal integrates with and strengthens the layout, retail character and pedestrian flows of the centre; and*

b) Does not prejudice the effective use of upper floors; and

c) Maintains a vibrant and attractive shopping street frontage

- 5.5 The proposal's accordance with these policy requirements is detailed as follows.
- 5.6 In response to point a.), the proposed development will make use of an existing vacant unit and encourage further pedestrian flows into the shopping centre, increasing footfall and benefitting the centre as a whole.
- 5.7 In relation to point b.), the proposed development will provide a active use for an upper floor unit, encouraging use of an upper floor unit.
- 5.8 In relation to point c.), the proposed development is at first floor level with a number of retail units located elsewhere in the shopping centre. Regardless, the proposed development will bring a vacant unit back into an active use which is considered to benefit the shopping centre more widely, increasing footfall and the likelihood of gym users using local shops as part of their visit.
- 5.9 As such, the principle of development is considered acceptable.
- 5.10 **Sustainable Development:** PPW defines sustainable development as the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the well-being goals. In line with this definition the proposed development will contribute to the local area in line with this definition. The proposal will create jobs both during the refurbishment process and during its operation.

- 5.11 Socially, through the provision of jobs, the proposal will give individuals a feeling of self-worth and enable them to have a career; a key pillar of social mobility.
- 5.12 In environmental terms, the proposed development utilises an existing building, helping to preserve natural resources involved in the erection of new buildings and the associated inputs to these processes.
- 5.13 Lastly, the long-term vacancy of the site would undermine each of the above sustainability objectives.
- 5.14 Policy SP11 – Employment Growth of the LDP states that existing employment uses will be supported and safeguarded and new and expanding employment developments must be encouraged. The proposal therefore seeks for the redevelopment of a vacant employment space in line with Policy SP11.
- 5.15 The Business Plan discusses employment potential in more detail, however it is clear that the proposed development has strong economic potential.
- 5.16 **Character and Appearance of the Area:** LDP Policy BE1 – Design states that all development proposals will be expected to demonstrate high quality design which fully takes into account the natural, historic and built environmental context and contributes to the creation of attractive, sustainable places. Proposals will only be permitted where they compliment and enhance the character and appearance of the site, building or area in terms of siting, appearance, scale, height, massing and elevation treatment.
- 5.17 Whereby the works are enclosed within the core of the building, the proposal is not considered to have any detrimental impacts upon the wider character of the area in accordance with LDP Policy BE1.

- 5.18 **Residential Amenity:** Policy EN8 of the Local Plan states that proposal which would be likely to have an unacceptable adverse effect on health, biodiversity and/or local amenity or would expose people to unacceptable risk due to the following will not be permitted (inter alia): noise pollution. Policy BE1 goes further to state that proposals will only be permitted where it would not have a significant adverse impact on highway safety, the amenity of occupiers of adjacent land or the community.
- 5.19 The gym is to be open 24 hours 7 days a week, and has been accompanied by an acoustic survey prepared by ACA acoustics which carried out a sound insulation performance of the existing separating floor between the gym and adjoining residential dwellings.
- 5.20 A mitigation scheme is provided within the report to ensure that operational airborne and impact noise emissions from the gym achieve acceptable sound levels to adjoining and nearby receptors.
- 5.21 The conclusion of the report is that subject to the mitigation measures suggested, the proposed development will not have a harmful impact on residential amenity, allowing the proposal to accord with Policies EN8 and BE1 are adhered to.
- 5.22 **Transport and Parking:** LDP Policy TR2 – Design and Access of New Development states that development proposals will only be permitted where the following criteria is satisfied:
1. The development does not compromise the safe, effective and efficient use of the highway network and does not have an adverse impact on highway safety or create unacceptable levels of traffic generation
 2. Appropriate levels of parking and cycling facilities are provided and the access arrangements for the site allow for the safe

manoeuvring of any service vehicles associated with the planned use;

3. The development is accessible by a range of travel means, including public transport and safe cycle and pedestrian routes.

5.23 Technical Advice Note 18 supports this further and details wider sustainable development policy objectives including ensuring that new development is located where there is, or will be, good access to public transport, walking and cycling thereby minimising the need for travel and fostering social inclusion.

5.24 This application is submitted alongside a Transport Statement prepared by John Russell Transport Planning.

5.25 The report details that owing to the site's town centre location, the proposal has the potential to be accessible by non-car means, with several trips occurring likely to be in conjunction with a trip to the town centre, further reducing the number and length of journeys taken.

5.26 The site falls within 400m of the Port Talbot Bus Station as well as within 800m of the Port Talbot Parkway train station offering onwards journeys to Cardiff, Pembroke Dock, Swansea, Fishguard Harbour etc.

5.27 The wider shopping centre is also served by a number of vehicle access points and car parks located within a short walk of the site and serve the wider town centre uses, 4 out of the 5 car parks identified to fall within 500m of the site provide 24 hour parking.

5.28 The survey carries out a travel demand assessment which states that the extant and proposed uses are found to generate a similar volume of visitors during peak hours, thus resulting in a de minimis impact on the operation of the highway network.

- 5.29 The site is therefore identified as a highly sustainable location with strong public transport connections as existing as well as a high provision of 24 hour access car parking facilities without detriment to the highway network in accordance with Local Plan policy TR2 and TAN18.
- 5.30 **Cycle Provision:** Cycle storage is not provided on site, but communal cycle storage is available in the wider shopping centre.
- 5.31 **Refuse Provision:** Waste and recycling facilities will be provided by the wider shopping centre as existing.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 This statement has demonstrated that the proposed development is acceptable in principle and makes an efficient use of land.
- 6.2 Material planning considerations have been carefully considered and analysed, as evidenced in section 5 of this statement and the supporting plans and documents. It is considered the proposed development would contribute to the occupation of a vacant employment unit without adverse effect on the character of the area or the amenity of neighbouring residents in line with Policies SC1, R2, SP11, BE1 and TR2.
- 6.3 It is considered that the proposed scheme complies with relevant Development Plan Policies and is further supported by National Guidance. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that planning permission is granted.

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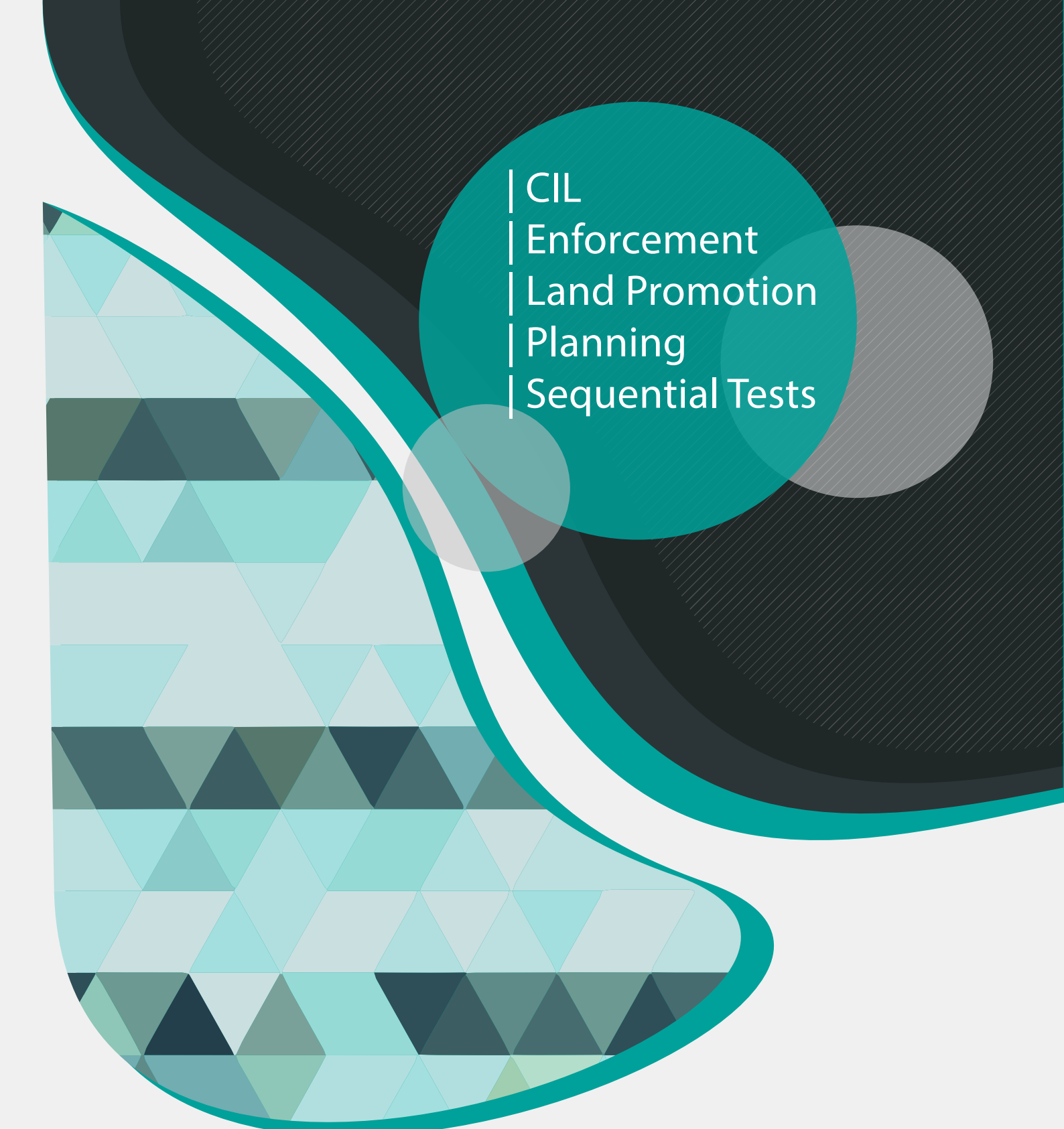
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