

Planning Dept
London Borough of Bexley
Civic Offices
2 Watling Street
Bexleyheath
Kent DA6 7AT

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Sidcup Sports Club, Sydney Road, Sidcup

Please find accompanying documents as part of a resubmission proposing the variation of morning opening hours of the gymnasium, ancillary to the clubhouse. The reason for refusal, given the content of the case report, was confused at best and, in the circumstances, to protect my position, I have appealed the Council's previous decision. In the process I have also applied for an award of costs given that it was patently obvious from the case report that the officer had not only failed to visit the site – essential to familiarise himself with the club's buildings, car parks and site layout – but also had not properly understood the self-explanatory accompanying Statement.

In the event, and in the face of a significant number of representations which showed considerable support for the proposal the two letters of objection received from neighbouring occupiers were, instead, considered to outweigh the general benefits of the proposal. Doubtless, the officer will fall back on his indication that the highway authority had raised concerns but, again, I am not convinced from the report that an even-handed approach was adopted by the Council, preferring instead to take the lead from a 2012 appeal decision which, incidentally, was concerned only with an intended extension of late hours in respect of evening functions with possible noise breakout from music, significant attendance of such and associated vehicle parking. The context of such is markedly different, yet consider the generalised and unsubstantiated statements made by the case officer in his report:

- *“...by virtue of its start time, intensity of use and close proximity to neighbouring residents is likely to give rise to undue noise and disturbances to the residents at 53-67 Sydney Road due to the early arrival of guests and staff.”*

The truth of the matter is that there are no restrictions as to staff entering and leaving the premises and buildings; the restrictive condition refers only to “customers and members”. Due to the very limited size of the gym – especially compared to the club’s function hall – the propensity for vehicles arriving and leaving between 6am and 7.30am, as applied for, is limited. Further, and I refer you here to the site layout included within the Supporting Statement now included, the car park which would be utilised practicably is nowhere near the rear garden boundaries of Nos 53-67. Would this realistically give rise to an unacceptable situation involving slamming of car doors and the chattering of guests as they arrive to the point of undue disturbance to local residents? No, and a site visit would have confirmed the actual situation on the ground.

The case report also states:

“A required travel plan for the nursery was refused in 2017 and has yet to be resubmitted.”

I am an independent applicant, and should not be disqualified for the absence of a travel plan which is outside of my control. Moreover, if the Council regards this to be significant then it should have taken the matter up with the operators of the nursery some four years ago with a view to enforcing its own conditions.

I would also draw your attention to the general content of the case report. The text under the ‘Relevant Guidance’ and ‘Approach to Minor Material Amendments’ takes up a considerable amount of space, and also needlessly, given that it refers to such matters as *“depth or height of the proposed building”, “additional and/or repositioned windows/doors/openings”*. What possible relevance is this to the proposal in hand? I can only assume it was a ‘copy and paste’ exercise, but surely the text should be tailored and adapted to the actual proposal involved.

The approach taken by the Council to the previous application gives little confidence as to it objectively reconsidering the proposal. Nonetheless, in the wish to avoid the delay that would likely arise from an appeal, I am resubmitting the application with additional information. That said, I feel a concurrent appeal is necessary whereby an award of costs is sought due to wasted time and the unnecessary expense incurred which must surely be seen as amounting to unreasonable behaviour by the Council.

Yours faithfully

J Pressney

