

# Planning Statement

---

**Job Title** Unit 4, 16 Alder Hills Industrial Estate, Poole BH12 4AR

**Date** 4<sup>th</sup> January 2024

**Subject** Planning Application for Change of Use of Unit 4

**Applicant** AK Academy of Dancing

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Statement follows on from a consented application (APP/23/00599/F, dated 20/07/2023) for change of use at the Units 1 to 3. The agreed change was to the Sui Generis use class. The adjacent unit (Unit 4, 16 Alder Hills Industrial Estate) has recently become available and is being considered for expansion. Unit 4 is, technically, designated as an employment unit. The site (and adjacent consented units) is shown on the Location Plan accompanying this application.

1.2 The units are of steel truss construction, with brick/blockwork elevations, completed in steel profile cladding to the upper elevations with a pitched roof.

1.3 The unit has been previously occupied by one occupier and is separated from Units 1 to 3 by a dividing blockwork wall. It and Units 1 to 3 utilise a common fire escape route.

1.4 We are told that the units have an eaves height of approximately 3.6m and clear height of approximately 3.4m. The internal gross floor area of approximately 172m<sup>2</sup> in total. The unit benefits from a forecourt parking area with further vehicle spaces in the industrial estate overflow parking area to the south. Both are included in the proposed lease for Unit 4.

1.5 The site is located in Flood Zone 1 and is not likely to be subject to future flooding.

## 2.0 PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

### Planning Policy

2.1 The proposed site is currently designated as employment land where:

- *Policy PP2 states that "retail and commercial leisure needs will be directed towards Poole town centre, with supporting growth in the district and local centres to meet the localised daily needs that are easily accessible for nearby residents through active and sustainable forms of travel".*

In this proposal, the Applicant is aiming to expand on the existing consented Unit 1 to 3 facilities which bring local dance education to a suitable, sustainable location that caters for clients in the northern and eastern sectors of Poole whilst not forcing them to travel into central Poole, particularly at peak times. There is a wide range of pupil ages, and the younger ones need to be escorted.

- *Policy PP3 reinforces that "Poole town centre, as defined on the Policies Map, will be the most suitable location for the most intensive uses and major developments which generate the highest levels of activity".*

The proposal cannot be considered either "*intensive*" or one of the "*highest levels of activity*". The level of activity can be described in terms of vehicle attraction & generation and throughput of students as a steady turnover of limited numbers where the period on site for students takes about an hour or so.

- *The preamble to Policy PP16 recognises 'that here are other uses outside the traditional range of B Use Classes that can provide employment and therefore might be suitable to be located on an existing employment area. In all cases, including where non-B use class operations (such as gyms, dance studios etc.) are proposed, the applicant will be expected to include evidence of alternative sites considered, outside of existing employment areas, for the proposed use.*

According to policy, proposals can include sites in Poole town centre, district/local centres, other vacant retail premises, isolated employment sites and community facilities. Later in this Planning Statement, the applicant will set out the employment benefits of the proposed use in terms of number of jobs created at the currently vacant site. This site, within an existing designated employment area, will be safeguarded (by a consent of the application) for uses which generate employment and which are appropriate to the geographic location and sustainable travel corridor.

- 2.2 Traditionally, the activities falling within the old Use Class B1 are office, research & development and light industrial, along with B2 being general industrial and B8 Storage and distribution. These are now in Class E - with complications ! There is also a belief that there is a need for close associations with neighbouring businesses but in small commercial estates, such as this one, there is a tendency for them to be standalone with no links with other adjacent businesses.

In recent years the list of businesses in this commercial area has included:

- Medical Practitioners
- Landscapers
- Electronics Manufacturer
- Mobile Phones
- Model Shop
- Mortgage Consultants
- Health Foods
- Transport Services
- Loft Conversions
- Badges & Trophies
- Recycling Store
- Photographic Studio

Source: Endole

There is no evidence that existing businesses on the estate have close associations or links to other businesses on the commercial site such as one would find on, say, a predominantly construction & building materials or electronics & manufacturing based estate.

- 2.3 Another concern intended to be protected by policy is the potential for adverse impact in more sensitive locations such as adjacent residential areas. This less intrusive proposed use (no impact of HGV movements, loading and

unloading, refrigerated or distribution vehicles and the like) will fit in well and preserve the amenity of the nearest residential properties and provide protection by appropriate soundproofing.

- 2.4 An extract from Google Maps (copyrights acknowledged with thanks) is given below. It can be seen that it is unlikely that the application site would cause difficulties for the residential units compared to traditional uses such as haulage and distribution.



#### Overview Of Estate - © Google Maps 2023

Note the location of the screening, Transport Services depot and the application site relative to the residential area. It is unlikely that, even if it was agreed as a leisure use, the application site would cause difficulties for the residential compared to traditional uses such as haulage and distribution.

- 2.5 Advice and guidance also refer to the NPPF (Annex 2: Glossary) identifying leisure as a main town centre use. For reasons previously stated, we do not

consider this to be a leisure use and the allowed appeal also agreed a site similar to this does not need to be within the town centre. There are several similar use locations not within the town centre that support this.

2.6 This application, and the previous consented proposal, is not considered as leisure. Logically, this proposal is Sui Generis.

2.7 Indeed, the “leisure as a main town centre use” is not supported on a local basis where the three main leisure centres are distributed across the area, albeit with one in the town centre. These sites include:

- Ashdown Leisure Centre, which is situated on Adastral Road at Canford Heath – well beyond the A3049 main route around Poole and is not directly related to Poole Town Centre.
- Poole (Dolphin) Leisure Centre, which is situated near the Dolphin Centre – within the Poole Town Centre and, therefore serves that catchment area and complies.
- Rossmore Leisure Centre, which is situated north of Herbert Avenue and south of the A3049, serves that catchment area and is not directly related to the town centre.

2.8 These main leisure sites, and indeed wider activities such as combined leisure and entertainment complexes (such as cinema, bowling, restaurants, water park and the numerous individual uses that comprise these) have at least one physical property in common. For their type of use they take up comparatively large amounts of space per unit, sometimes for comparatively small end-user numbers. In a similar way, although the Dance Academy is not so size intensive, the proposed use is never likely to be a “dance studio over a town centre shop” scale establishment. Whilst this may seem obvious, the proposed use has requirements for the multi-groups of users to move freely and easily within the parameters of the studios which in turn will limit the

numbers of students at the site at any one time whilst dictating a minimum size of accommodation.

- 2.9 Whilst local church halls and clubs used to be able to accommodate the proposed use for smaller groups by hire of their hall, the many legislative requirements and growth in this sector have meant that such businesses have relocated to more suitable, larger premises. This also, inevitably, requires premises of a physically larger nature where they can also be subdivided to provide a range of age-related activity at the same time. These practical, operational requirements mean that the Applicant is keen to take advantage of the vacant, adjacent Unit 4.

### **Highway Considerations**

- 2.10 During comments on the consented site, the Highway Authority referred to the similar site allowed at appeal and commented that the parking numbers were acceptable as proposed but (in pre-planning considerations for that application) suggested layout modifications prior to formal submission. We agreed with this approach and modified the consented parking layout to function in a correct fashion. We also added the provision of cycle storage, which will also have the capacity to cater for this, modest extension proposal.
- 2.11 This area is considered by the Highway Authority to be a sustainable transport corridor, as recognised in the previous consent. As such, the main highway considerations relate to on-site provision and movements.
- 2.12 The Applicant is keen to maximise social interaction and opportunities for the students and reduce the impact of travel by individual cars on roads around the area for clients and staff. It should be accepted that, from a transportation point of view, the student trips are already on the highway network, not only for the academy but also for matters such as trips to and from school, local stores and the like.

## Staffing & Employment

- 2.13 The staffing numbers appropriate to this proposed use have been calculated as follows.

<b>Existing Academy Staff Units 1 to 3</b> Area approximately 630m <sup>2</sup>	Full-Time Equivalent 5 F/T + 4 P/T = 7 FTE
--	---

<b>Proposed Ancillary Area Unit 4</b> Area approximately 172m <sup>2</sup>	Full-Time Equivalent additional 2 FTE
<b>Expected B1/B2/B8 Previous Class Use Occupation For Unit 4 (as the construction firm base)</b> Area approximately 172m <sup>2</sup>	Full-Time Equivalent 2 FTE for counter and warehouse uses or administration base.

The previous occupation of this small unit (construction firm) is likely to have less than the usual FTE of a "building and tool supplies" large warehouse and sales counter use. At 172m<sup>2</sup>, it can be seen from the above table, that there is no loss of employment in the unit. The overall figures for staffing are similar and, therefore, in terms of employment designation and highway impact of staff at peak times the proposal will be similar to the existing use and not likely to present problems. Parking arrangements are as approved for the unit and shown in relation to the main use (Units 1 to 3) on the parking plan. It should be noted that the proposed use will not be a separate leaseholder entity and, therefore, parking will be managed by the business on an "overall use" of Units 1 to 4 basis and with the option of overflow spaces to the south.

### 3.0 PREMISES AVAILABILITY SEARCH

- 3.1 In March 2023, the Applicant commissioned Sibbett Gregory to undertake a new, updated search for premises. That search built upon the previous searches over some six years or so, which resulted in the proposal and subsequent allowed appeal site at Compton Business Park.
- 3.2 The results of the search and comments are shown on the next page.

Availability Schedule 13<sup>th</sup> March 2023 – Required 6000 sq ft is approximately 558m<sup>2</sup>

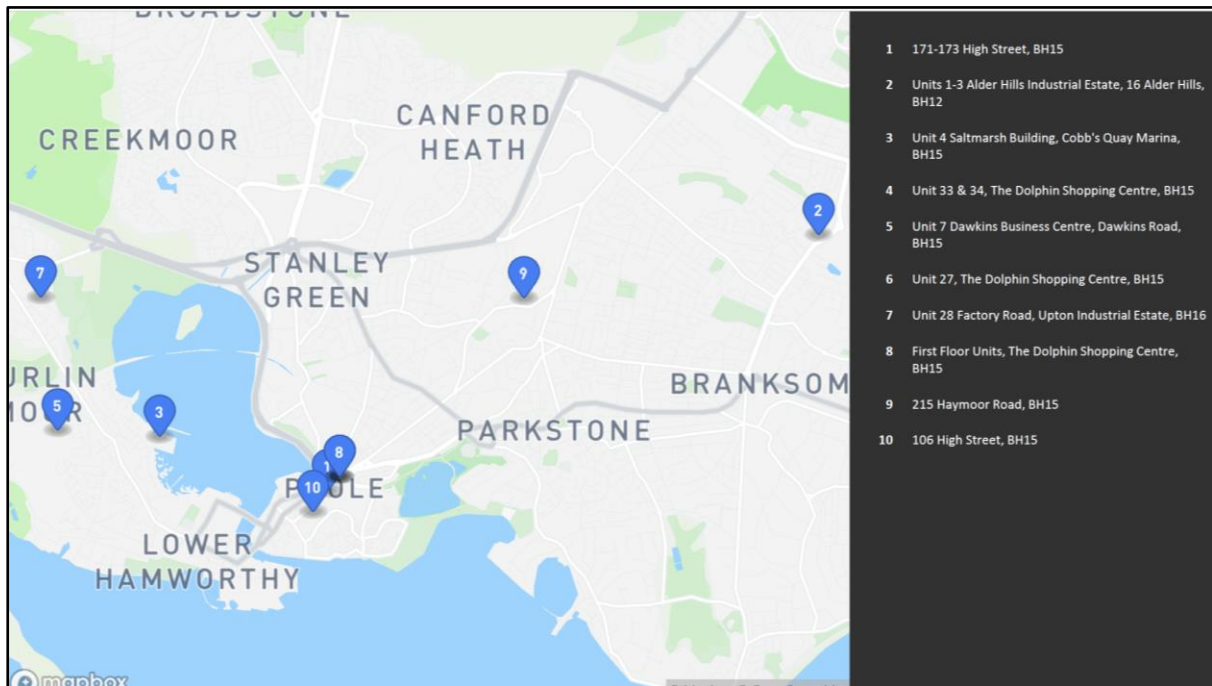
Ref.	Location	Poole Town Centre Location	Size Sq ft	Suitable
1	171 - 173 High Street, BH15	Yes	3,077	No. Too small.
2	Units 1 - 3 Alder Hills Industrial Estate BH12	No	6,748	Yes. Proposed site.
3	Unit 4 Saltmarsh Building, Cobb's Quay Marina, BH15	No	11,420	No. Far too large.
4	Unit 33 & 34, The Dolphin Shopping Centre, BH15	Yes	2,158	No. Too small.
5	Unit 7 Dawkins Business Centre, Dawkins Road, BH15	No	4,663	No. Smaller and wrong location.
6	Unit 27, The Dolphin Shopping Centre, BH15	Yes	1,953	No. Too small.
7	Unit 28 Factory Road, Upton Industrial Estate, BH16	No	6,303	No. Wrong location.
8	First Floor Units, The Dolphin Shopping Centre, BH15	Yes	4,230	No. Too small.
9	215 Haymoor Road, BH15	No	5,442	No. Difficult to convert.
10	106 High Street, BH15	Yes	1,920	No. Too small

It can be seen in the above table that 5 sites are located within the Poole town centre area. These are references 1, 4, 6, 8, and 10.

In terms of suitability, all share the characteristic of either being too small for conversion for the proposed use or wrong location.

The other sites, except the proposal site are not within the town centre (so would face similar policy consideration), one is far too large for the proposed use and, generally, they are not in appropriate or transport sustainable locations.





Produced by Sibbett Gregory – March 2023

3.3 A comprehensive site search over several years, and reconfirmed in March 2023, shows that the proposal site is the most appropriate for the proposed use. This argument, combined with being located along a sustainable transport corridor and the employment generated at the proposal site adds significant weight to the suitability of the location for the proposed use.

3.4 Within the proposed use there will be employment generation matching the non-vacant unit use. Such operation is not likely to cause conflict on or with the local highway network, adjacent employment units and parking. Should the Academy operations cease at this site, it would be relatively easy to revert back to the original use.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSIONS**

4.1 It is not unreasonable for the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to compare the proposal site with other sites nearer the town centre. Given the likely Sui Generis use class, it could be argued that this comparison becomes less appropriate due to the educational factors.

- 4.2 The Applicant has undertaken an extensive search for appropriate properties over a period of several years. The LPA will recall the successful, allowed appeal at Unit 12 Compton Business Park which became unsuitable when the business park owner decided to change security policy by closing the business park gates earlier in the day, thereby ruling out that site - despite the successful appeal that granted permission – and the recent consent at the adjacent units.
- 4.3 Commercial attributes of a particular operator should not dictate what is "suitable" and "available" in the context of the sequential test – the test was not one of an individual operator's preferences, or of which sites were available to that particular operator. Rather, reference should be to the type of use proposed by the application by approximate size, type and range of goods or activity and to what sites are available for that type of use or activity.
- 4.4 This is an accessible site, well located on a sustainable transport corridor and well connected to the town centre and demand further afield. Whilst there is limited flexibility on issues such as format and scale, the proposal fits well into the character and environment of the estate.
- 4.5 The application satisfies the sequential test, and it is not considered that the proposal will have an impact on town centre vitality and viability, including local consumer choice and trade in the town centre and the wider retail catchment.
- 4.6 With regard to character and appearance, elevations will remain as existing with the exception of information signage and it is considered unlikely that the proposals will detrimentally impact the character and appearance of the area.
- 4.7 With regard to amenity, given the nature and location of the proposal (within an area of employment) it is unlikely that any noise, etc., associated with the Academy would be of detrimental impact. Background noise and disturbance of the proposal will be of a lower nature than the previous use. There does

---

not appear to be any residential development within close enough proximity that would be affected.

4.8 Ample parking and turning facilities exist at the site to support the proposed use.

4.9 Given the conclusions reached in this Planning Statement, it is recommended that the planning application be approved subject to appropriate conditions.

Plans based on © Crown copyright and database rights 2013 Ordnance Survey  
Licence numbers 10003502, 100031673 or as otherwise annotated.

All other work © LGPS Resources