Applicant Statement – AWDM/0902/25

Nick West, MINDSET – The Training Club

Thank you for confirming the committee date for this application. Ahead of the meeting, we would like to place the following points on record to assist members in their consideration of the proposal.

1. DM11 protects employment, not vacancy

We are the long-term owners of the building. The unit has been vacant for several years despite proper marketing at a realistic rent. DM11's purpose is to safeguard employment, not to preserve empty floorspace. Refusing a viable Class E employment use results in continued vacancy and zero employment, which is contrary to the intention of the policy.

2. Class E is an employment-generating commercial use

A gym is a recognised Class E commercial use, in the same category as offices and health centres. It generates employment and does not constitute a loss of employment land. DM11 should not be applied as if the proposal removes employment **— it increases it**.

3. Marketing evidence clarification

The marketing exercise demonstrated no viable B-class demand. DM11 does not require continuous re-marketing or specify an expiry date, and the unit remains empty today. This confirms the evidence is still accurate and relevant.

4. Site-specific evidence outweighs strategic assumptions

The officer report relies on strategic studies from 2016/2020, which are pre-Class E and pre-pandemic. DM11 requires assessment of the actual circumstances of the site, not reliance on outdated generalised assumptions.

5. Precedent concerns do not apply

This case is based on very specific circumstances:

- long-term ownership
- long-term vacancy
- clear evidence of no viable B-class demand

Any future application elsewhere would need to demonstrate the same combination of factors. Approving this proposal does not create a general precedent.

6. Fallback – empty unit, no viable B-class use exists

As the long-term owners, we can confirm there is no fallback occupier. Refusal preserves long-term vacancy, which is the opposite of what DM11 is intended to achieve.

7. The proposed use is low-impact and well-managed

This is a small-scale, over-40s training facility with naturally modest group sizes and most activity taking place at evenings and weekends when the business park is quiet. Weekday use consists of structured sessions and some one-to-one coaching. The operational profile is low-impact and sits comfortably within what DM11 anticipates for Class E uses on commercial estates. As a qualified fitness coach who will run the gym personally, I will ensure responsible day-to-day management.

8. Noise and parking impacts are fully manageable

The over-40 demographic results in a naturally lower-impact operation. We welcome an acoustic assessment and mitigation condition. Standard gym soundproofing which will be installed, typically reduces noise by 40–55 dB. The site has ten dedicated parking spaces, and around 70% of visits occur outside standard business hours. A parking management plan condition is also acceptable.

9. Alternative sites were explored

We reviewed other premises, but none were suitable or available. DM11 does not require applicants to relocate when a viable employment-generating use can be delivered on an existing commercial estate.

10. Supports the council's wellbeing objectives

The proposal aligns with the Adur & Worthing Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which seeks to embed a "golden thread of health and wellbeing" through planning decisions. A training facility for people over 40 directly supports this aim. DM11 should therefore be applied in a way that recognises both the employment benefits and the wellbeing outcomes of this Class E use.

11. Support from neighbouring businesses

Most neighbouring businesses have raised no concerns regarding noise or parking and support bringing the long-vacant unit back into productive use.

We hope this summary assists members in understanding the site-specific circumstances and the benefits of the proposal. We remain committed to working constructively with the council and look forward to presenting the application at committee.