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DESIGN AND ACCESS / PLANNING STATEMENT

Change of use of vacant commercial premises from Use Class E, to educational centre use (class F1-a), new shopfront and signage, and a/c units.

Application by: Mr Davinder Sokhi

Property Address: 128 Field End Road, Pinner, HA5 1RJ.

December 2024

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Design and Access / Planning Statement is submitted on behalf of the applicant in respect of a planning application for the change of use of the premises to F1(a) educational centre, new shopfront signage, and a/c units. This Statement should be read in conjunction with other drawings and documents accompanying the planning application.

1.2 This Statement comprises:

- A description of the application property and surrounding area;
- A description of the proposed development;
- A summary of relevant planning history; and,
- An assessment of the proposed development against relevant planning policy.

2.0 APPLICATION PROPERTY AND SURROUNDING AREA

2.1 The planning application relates to the ground floor premises of No. 128 on the west side of Field End Road. The overall building is three storeys. The ground floor premises has a gross internal floor area of approx. 70m². The premises was last used as a health food store.

Figure 1 *– No. 128 Field End Road.*

2.2 The premises is located within a designated town centre. The surrounding area is mixed use in nature. Sightly further afield there are many schools, and also recreation grounds and commercial uses.

2.3 The site is well provided for in terms of transport and accessibility. Bus route No. 282 runs along Field End Road and within walking distance are Route No's H11 and H13. Eastcote Train Station is less than 5 minutes walk away. There are public cycle parking facilities opposite the premises. The area surrounding the site is very well provided for in terms of footpaths, and pedestrian walkways connecting to shops, services and residential areas.

3.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT & INFORMATION ON APPLICANT

3.1 It is proposed to change the use of the premises from E to F1(a) to facilitate a maths tuition facility.

3.2 There is ample space within the premises to store waste until it is ready for collection.

3.3 A new shopfront and signage are proposed. The proposed shopfront would reference the prevailing shopfront form along the parade and provide a much more active frontage than the existing shopfront. New internally illuminated fascia signage is proposed along with a projecting blade sign. All signage would be similar in dimensions and appearance to signage on neighbouring buildings.

3.4 It is not by accident that the applicant seeks to open a Mathnasium facility within a designated town centre. Significant experience and analysis by Mathnasium has shown that such locations are key to successful operations as they enable parents to make use of adjacent services while their child undergoes tuition. The convenience element for parents is essential considering the frequency of tuition. As an overview, Mathnasium started operations in 2002 and has grown into a worldwide brand with over 1,000 centres in 15 countries. Mathnasium offer extra-curricular mathematics education for children aged 6 to 16, and the model is based around offering children something notably different from that which is offered by schools. Mathnasium centres differ significantly to conventional educational providers and aim to create a fun atmosphere such that children actually look forward to their tuition sessions. The "Mathnasium method" of teaching is proven to be successful. Children's weaknesses are identified via an initial assessment and a

bespoke learning schedule is then designed to focus on their weakness areas at their own pace, supported by trained instructors. Results from the work programme are uploaded to the Mathnasium system to so that the next learning program is always focused on the areas in need of improvement. The children play maths games and complete puzzles that encourage a positive attitude towards learning.

3.5 Children would attend the premises for a 60-90 minute session. It is preferred that parents don't remain within the centre as this is a significant distraction for the child, and so it is asked that parents return at pick up time to collect their child. This necessitates the careful choosing of locations. Centre locations are assessed in terms of the neighbouring businesses and their suitability as a place for a parent to spend upwards of an hour on a regular basis. The neighbouring commercial parade in Field End Road will provide such a synergy. Retailers specifically named by Mathnasium customers as "preferred retailers" to visit during the instructional hours include: cafés, bars, restaurants, supermarkets, gyms, hairdressers, beauticians, clothing retailers, and children's wear. The land use / demographic profile of Field End Road is very closely matched to that of Mathnasium's other existing locations. This is an ideal area, as it has a good range of schools within walking / cycling distance, both primary and secondary including: Bishop Ramsey, Warrender Primary, Newnham Junior, Pinner High School, Cannon Lane Primary, and Coteford Junior. This compliments the Mathnasium business because of the favourable proximity.

3.6 Mathnasium UK centres are typically between 600 – 1,500sq.ft. in size. Mathnasium operate on a membership basis (rather like a gymnasium) and on average each student attends 2 - 3 times per week, for 60 to 90 minutes per visit. There are generally around 6 times the number of members enrolled than actually attending at any one time - this is because several sessions are provided on any one day so more members can be accommodated than just the number of seats available. With careful scheduling it is generally expected to have around 100 students per day passing through the doors once the centre is at full capacity. Some key points on this include:

- No more than 40 students would be catered for at a time.
- No more than 5 staff would be present at any one time. In all likelihood 2-3 staff members would be present at any one time.
- The main thrust of activity on any day is across four hours: 3.30-7.30pm Monday to Friday, and 9am-3pm on Saturday. So the 100 students per day would be spread across these times.
- In many Mathnasium businesses, staff meet many children at their school and walk them to the premises (they can be insured for this). There is scope for this to happen here.
- There is a waiting area inside so parents do not need to wait outside.

- Most of prospective customers reside locally (as is the business model for the use) so cycle and walking are realistic means of travel.
- Waste can readily be stored in the premises. The use generates minimal waste. Based on the knowledge of other Mathnasium businesses, it is anticipated there would be no more than 3 bin bags of recycling materials per week (all of which is paper). A firm will be appointed for waste collection.

3.7 There are in excess of approx. 20 Mathnasium centres operating in the UK, and more in the pipeline. Research has shown that the business model is not affected by extremes such as economy, weather or any changes in 'fashion' trends; there is an ever-increasing need for supplementary education and parents are now prioritising this over other discretionary spend items. In Mathnasium's more established markets (US and Canada) retailers are now very aware of the "Mathnasium effect" and as a result new retailers are actively seeking out premises near to a Mathnasium Centre, as there is a marked upturn in "pedestrian traffic" whenever a centre opens (source: CBRE Commercial Real Estate Services) due to the nature of parents spending upwards of an hour or so in neighbouring businesses, two to three times per week. The centres are vibrant and dynamic operations, and they participate regularly in community outreach programmes where fun activities are organised (usually based around maths puzzles and challenges) engaging with local parents and complementary businesses to ensure that they are seen as a valued cornerstone of any local community.

3.8 4D Planning have successfully assisted Mathnasium secure planning permission in many other locations throughout the UK:

• In 2024, 4D Planning secured planning permission for a Mathnasium facility at 76 Sheen Lane, SW14 8LP - Richmond Upon Thames (Planning Permission Ref. No. 24/1998/FUL). The premises is within a designated main centre, a key office area, and opposite a secondary shopping frontage.

• In 2024, 4D Planning secured planning permission for a Mathnasium Facility at 132 High Street, Birmingham, B14 7LG – Birmingham City Council (Planning Permission Ref. No. 2024/03220/PA). The premises is located within a designated District Centre, and primary shopping frontage.

• In 2024, 4D Planning secured planning permission for a Mathnasium Facility at 187 Hampton Hill High Street, Richmond, TW12 1NL – Richmond Borough Council (Planning Permission Ref. No. 24/1264/FUL). The premises is located within a designated main centre and secondary shopping frontage.

• In 2024, 4D Planning secured planning permission for a Mathnasium facility at Unit 2, The Old Fire Station, Copenhagen Street, Worcester, WR1 2EB – Worcester City Council (Planning Permission Ref. No. 24/00330/FUL). The premises is located within a designated town centre and is also allocated for retailing.

• In 2023, 4D Planning secured planning permission for a Mathnasium facility at 72 Stamford New Road, WA14 1BS – Trafford Council (Planning Permission Ref. No. 110483/FUL/23). No. 72 is within a designated town centre.

• In 2023, 4D Planning secured planning permission for a Mathnasium facility at 52-54 Heath Road – Richmond Council (Planning Permission Ref. No. 23/0095/FUL). No. 52-54 is within a designated main centre and secondary shopping frontage.

• In 2022, 4D Planning secured permission for a Mathnasium facility at 107 Drayton Gardens, London, SW10 9QT - Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (Planning Permission Ref. No. PP/22/02465). No. 107 is within a designated district shopping centre and secondary shopping frontage.

• In 2021, 4D Planning secured planning permission for a Mathnasium facility at 413 Honeypot Lane, Stanmore, HA7 1JJ – Harrow Borough Council (Planning Permission Ref. No. P/4818/21). No. 413 is within a designated town centre and designated local centre shopping frontage.

• In 2020, 4D Planning secured planning permission for two Mathnasium facilities at 1388 High Road, Whetstone, London, N20 9BH – Barnet Borough Council (Planning Application ref. No. Ref. No. 20/6233/FUL – Barnet) and 911 Green Lanes, London, N21 2QP – Enfield (Planning Permission Ref. No. 20/04083/FUL). No. 1388 is located within a designated main retail frontage, and No. 911 Green lanes is located within a designated town centre.

• In 2016, 4D Planning secured planning permission for a Mathnasium facility at a premises at 289 Watling Street Radlett Hertfordshire – Hertsmere Borough Council (Planning Permission Ref. No. 16/1929/FUL). This involved the loss of an A1 unit in a retail area however the Planning Authority recognised the unique nature of the business and the positive impacts it would have for nearby businesses.

• We note also a Mathnasium facility granted permission in 2018 at a premises at 36 Woodford Road, Bramhall, Stockport SK7 1PA - Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council (Planning Permission Ref. No. DC/070068). This involved the loss of an A1 unit in a secondary shopping frontage of a district centre. The Planning Authority acknowledged that the proposed use would increase the diversity of uses in the centre thereby contributing to the vitality and viability of the centre.

4.0 PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 There is no recent / relevant planning history for the premises according to Hillingdon online planning records.

5.0 PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (NPPF) seeks to promote a balance of land uses. Para. 86 is of particular importance and it states:

"*Planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. Planning policies should:*

a) define a network and hierarchy of town centres and promote their long-term vitality and viability – by allowing them to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allows a suitable mix of uses (including housing) and reflects their distinctive characters…" (underlining is authors emphasis)

The proposed development is in response to changing trends in the commercial / education sector in general.

Mixed use areas (including high streets and commercial nodes) have been undergoing a transformation for many years. It is widely acknowledged that the future success of such areas lies not in retail alone, but rather in service, leisure and mixed uses. Customers want to seek out 'experiences' and uniqueness. A 2016 Report[1] on Town Centre Investment Zones found:

"*The retail/leisure/property/investment sectors are agreed that the future of town centres is no longer mainly about shopping. It is more likely to be as much about leisure, living, learning and local services, as well as business*"

The proposed development represents an innovative and unique business in a mixed use context, and one with a proven track record. It will significantly increase footfall to the benefit of existing and new businesses nearby. The proposed use represents a pro-active response to changing educational and commercial trends. Conventional commerce continues to struggle not least due to a combination of Brexit and Covid 19 knock on impacts.

5.2 Amongst the findings of a Royal Town Planning Institute Research Paper (*Planning for Post Covid Cities*, December 2020) were that:

- Visits to local shops may continue to decline post Covid-19.
- There appears to be general consensus among commenters that there will be 'no going-back' to previous shopping habits.
- With reduced face-to-face contacts with family, friends and colleagues, commenters suggested that High Streets could be revitalised as a hub for social interaction.

The proposed use would very much align itself with the emerging future nature of mixed use areas in that such areas are less about conventional retailing but rather new types of commerce activity and the activity that takes place on the street and how this is fostered by adjoining businesses.

[1] Town Centre Investment Zones. Getting Investment Back Into the High Street. Report of the Fragmented Ownership Group. British Property Federation. January 2016.

The London Plan (2021)

5.3 Policy SD6 (Town Centres and High Streets) of the London Plan states that "...*London's varied town centres should be promoted and enhanced by:*

1) encouraging strong, resilient, accessible and inclusive hubs with a diverse range of uses that meet the needs of Londoners, including main town centre uses, night-time economy, civic, community, social and residential uses..."

It is considered that the proposed development is consistent with the above London Plan provisions. The proposed development is a specialist commercial / educational use, and one which is wholly appropriate for a town centre.

Hillingdon Local Plan. Development Management Policies (2020)

5.4 Local Plan policies DMTC 1 (Town Centre Development), DMTC 2 (Primary and Secondary Shopping Areas), and DMTC 3 (Maintaining the Viability of Local Centres and Local Parades) are of particular relevance to the proposed development. In short these p[policies set out that the Council will:

- Support 'main town centre uses'.

- In secondary shopping areas, allow uses which do not cause harm to the vitality and viability of the town centre.

- Retain uses that support the continued viability and attractiveness to the locality they serve.

It is submitted that the proposed development is entirely consistent with these policies. The proposal would be a specialist community focussed business that would add to the mix of uses in the Hove area, at a time when traditional and small shop units are often struggling. It is noted that the policies in question have in large part been made redundant through the overhaul of the use class system (i.e. new Use Class E). The overall surrounding area is already equipped with a wide variety of commercial uses. Arguably if the premises were to be occupied by E use class operator, it would likely directly compete with the new emerging businesses which could be detrimental considering how challenging the current retail environment is.

The community is well served by E use class businesses in the vicinity and typically have a choice available as to which provider they choose considering there are often multiple operators within the same industry. However, with thousands of children within the target customer demographic, the demand for maths tuition is severely underserved within the area.

5.5 In further support of the proposed use we submit as follows:

- ***The proposed use will complement and support the ongoing operations of neighbouring emerging business uses. The proposal will bring significant footfall to the area. Existing Mathnasium's centres have shown that retailers are now very aware of the "Mathnasium effect" and as a result many new retailers actively seek out premises near to a Mathnasium Centre, as there is a marked upturn in "pedestrian traffic" whenever a centre opens due to the nature of parents spending an hour or so in neighbouring businesses, two to three times per week.***
- ***The location is central to many schools in the catchment.***
- ***The proposed use has at its core an educational focus. It seeks to better the educational attainment of children and thus enhance their further education and employment prospects.***
- ***Parents leaving children off at the centre will use nearby businesses and services whilst children are in attendance.***
- ***The centre is a commercial business (albeit with a community focus) and will function like a shop / office in many respects.***
- ***The premises will operate during typical business hours.***
- ***There is no potential for adverse impacts to nearby residential properties.***
- ***There would be no adverse traffic impacts (see para 6.0 below).***
- ***An active window display can be provided for. There are many examples of Mathnasium facilities on high streets across and all present a high quality, interesting and active window display – see Figures 3-5 below.***
- ***The proposal will significantly enhance the vitality of the commercial parade.***

Figure 3 *– Mathnasium Harrow.*

Figure 4 *– Mathnasium Clapham.*

Figure 5 *– Mathnasium Crouch End.*

Figure 6 *– Mathnasium Heath Road, Richmond (approved under Permission Ref. No. 23/0095/FUL)*

5.6 Local Plan Policy DMHB 13 (Shopfronts) sets out that new shopfronts and alterations to existing shopfronts should complement the original design, proportions, materials and detailing of the building of which it forms a part and the surrounding street scene. In addition, it is sought to resist the removal of shopfronts of architectural or historic interest, particularly those listed on the Register of Locally Listed Buildings.

It is submitted that the existing shopfront whilst of somewhat pleasant appearance, is not of architectural or historic interest. It is an oddity in a parade characterised by simple design, active frontages and large spans of glazing. The proposed shopfront would reference the prevailing shopfront form along the parade and provide a much more active frontage than the existing shopfront.

5.7 Policy DMTC 4 (Amenity and Town Centre Uses) states that town centre uses should not cause unacceptable disturbance or loss of amenity to nearby properties by reason of noise. Whilst an a/c unit is proposed on the rear elevation, it is at remove from any neighbouring residential window, and the unit operates with low noise levels. It should be noted too that the a/c unit would really only operate during the hours noted in para 3.6 above. The applicant is happy to discuss any planning permission conditions pertaining to noise restrictions.

6.0 PARKING AND RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

6.1 The parking requirement of the proposed use would be no greater than the approved extant use. Furthermore, the site is very served by bus routes, and is within walking distance of residential areas. There are public bicycle parking facilities along Field End Road. A significant proportion of attendees to the centre will use public / sustainable transport (as they would if attending school). An important point to stress is that the proposed use is not a conventional traffic / parking generator use as a typical shop or office might be. The students attending obviously don't generate parking demand. It is the research and experience of Mathnasium that the few parents who do drive children to the centre will not simply park up nearby and wait a full 90 minutes. Rather they will travel to services and facilities nearby and thus the proposed use is part of multi-purpose trips by parents, and part of a series of linked visits. Most parents who drive will likely park up at a business/service and both drop-off and pick up children from this point. It is noted that there is pay parking along the street.

6.2 It is not considered there would be any adverse impact to neighbouring residential amenity as there would be little if any difference to the extant use in this regard.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 The application site is within walking distance of residential areas, day to day shops, schools, services and facilities. The site is accessible and sustainable in terms of access and transport.

7.2 The proposed development is considered to be in compliance with NPPF policies, the London Plan, and the Hillingdon Local Plan.