

Presentation to the Planning Committee, North Norfolk District Council

Thursday, July 24th at the NNDC offices in Cromer

Sheridan Turner, Chair, Potter Heigham Parish Council

Thank you Chair and members of the committee for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Potter Heigham Parish Council.

First contrary to what has been published in the press and social media, the Parish Council is not objecting to a women's only gym, is not against business development.

We are objecting to the most recent planning request made by the Hut Gym to extend its operating hours to 6:15 am to 8 pm Monday to Friday and Saturday mornings. It is the volume of traffic that is generated by a business that has grown exponentially over the past 6 years that have generated concern.

The Council understands that you consider each planning application based on its own merit and what is presented at that time. The Council's objective is to present the holistic picture of what has transpired over the past six years and demonstrate the phenomenon of creep from what was approved by the Planning Inspectorate in 2019 to what is happening today. The many incremental changes made to the business operations have collectively led to a transformational change negatively affecting the community and the environment.

The Hut Gym began its operations in 2017. In 2019 they submitted an application retrospectively for change of use of an agricultural building to a fitness studio and car park. This was refused but upon appeal the Planning inspectorate granted permission based on the Condition that the gym was operating out of a small cubicle, primarily one to one instruction with some small classes and one employee and NOT open outside of 0615 to 1730 hours Monday to Friday.

Although these conditions were clear they were never adhered to in practice. Gradually more classes were added, three additional staff were employed, and the gym was functioning seven days a week as was published on their website. This has been a blatant disregard for the planning process and your mandate to consider and decide on planning applications, ensuring that development aligns with local planning policies and regulations.

In June of 2023 another retrospective submission was made to extend the hours of operation from 0615 to 2100 hours seven days a week. This again was refused based on a clear deviation from the original Condition 2 specified by the Planning Inspectorate along with the position of Highways that this location could not be considered as suitable for a Fitness Studio as it would inevitably result in increased vehicular use of Marsh Road and the surrounding substandard network; would increase flood risk, risk to environmental health and detrimental to the mental health of residents.

In November 2023 Highways strongly objected to a planning application made by Glebe Farm (retrospectively) for change of use of a barn to commercial storage and vehicle parking. The relevance of the position presented by Highways against this application is congruent to the impact of the Hut Gym specifically the increased vehicle traffic. The width of the road is

below 4.1 meters in 8 locations that were measured with one being only 2.8 meters. It is therefore suitable for single file traffic only. This is all compounded in the winter when we only get 7 to 8 hours of daylight and no streetlights. Furthermore SAM 2 data gathered from a spot midpoint between The Hut Gym and the beginning of Marsh Road would suggest that traffic is almost double that of what would be expected according to TRICS assessment of the number of vehicles per household.

Respectfully the Parish Council urge you to decline this application.

Louisa Sharpless, Representing the Community

Thank you, Sheridan, for providing an overview of the bigger picture, which I hope the planning committee can see that any decision made on this application affects a far wider reach and impact than just a small lane.

As a member of the local community and living on Marsh Road I echo the parish councils' concerns.

Marsh Rd and most of Church Rd are single track lanes providing the only access for visitors, residents, bikers, dog walkers, and horse riders to Footpath 14, Weavers Way, Public Bridleway 16 along with access to the highways network. The single-track road has established hedgerows and banks, no designated passing places, no streetlights and several blind bends.

There are at least 5 homes whose driveways are on blind bends making egress challenging especially with a speed limit of 30mph. I know the Parish Council have repeatedly requested that this be changed to 20 mph but have been told it is cost prohibitive.

We have already had an incident (police notified) where a resident's dog was struck twice by a member of the gym's vehicle knocking the dog off balance as they had nowhere to go - they did not stop. On this occasion thankfully the dog was ok, however this proves the point that the road is not suitable or safe for the amount of vehicles it is currently housing.

To conclude this planning committee refused the original retrospective application to build the fitness studio, but this was overturned by appeal with an extremely specific set of conditions as outlined by Sheridan. Since 2019 this condition has never been respected or adhered to by the operators of the studio. Little by little additional hours have been added, classes have been increased to include men and children although it is still advertised as a private women's only facility. It is now a 7 day a week operation. By its own admission, the current application is a contradiction from reality.

We are not against business. This business is simply in the wrong location. It does not compliment the council's policies that have been put in place to protect rural amenity and highway safety.

I also respectfully ask you to decline this application and also put measures in place to ensure the conditions of the original application are adhered to. Thank you.