

Planning Committee Report	
Planning Ref:	PL/2025/0000931/FUL
Site:	Land at Walsgrave Club, 146 Woodway Lane, Coventry
Ward:	Henley
Proposal:	Change of use to car wash, erection of canopies and associated external works including container (retrospective)
Case Officer:	Tom Cox

SUMMARY

The car wash and associated facilities by virtue of the detrimental impact upon the neighbouring amenities and visual appearance of the area deem this use unacceptable in this predominantly residential area contrary to policies JE5 and DE1 of the Local Plan 2017 the emerging Local Plan and the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework.

BACKGROUND

This is a retrospective application for planning permission which has been made following investigation by Planning Enforcement.

KEY FACTS

Reason for report to committee:	5 representations received contrary to the officer recommendation (8 representations received in line with the officer recommendation)
Current use of site:	Car Park for the club
Proposed use of site:	Car Wash

RECOMMENDATION

Planning Committee are recommended to refuse planning permission for the reasons set out within this report.

REASON FOR DECISION

The retention of the car wash and associated structures and container is considered contrary to Policies DE1 and JE5 of the Coventry Local Plan 2017 and the emerging Local Plan by reason of the siting and use of the car wash and associated facilities which result in an unacceptable level of noise and disturbance from the equipment/machinery together with the associated comings and goings of vehicles resulting in a significant adverse impact upon residential amenities of adjacent residents, particularly in Elizabeth Way. Furthermore, the shipping container and makeshift canopy is considered harmful to the visual amenity of the locality and to the predominantly residential character of the area.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The site comprises a section of car park associated with the Walsgrave Social Club. The club fronts Woodway Lane, however is accessed from Narberth Way.

The site is located within a predominately residential area. Properties on Woodway Lane and Elizabeth Way sit directly adjacent to the boundary of the club with the properties on Narberth Way located directly facing on the opposite side of the road. The club site with the car park which measures approx. 80m by 40m, also has a bowling green and outdoor astroturf sports facility which sit between the car park and the southern boundary of the site.

The section of car park in question is the most eastern portion of the car park furthest away from the club building and sits behind the outdoor sports facility. The car park is surrounded by mature landscaping on the eastern and southern boundary with the north boundary being more open to Narberth Way.

There are 3 accesses into the large car park all from Narberth Way

APPLICATION PROPOSAL

The proposal is for retrospective permission for the change of use of the land from a car park to a car wash. The car wash includes a jet wash, a large shipping container which is being used to house 2 water pressure pumps and welfare facilities, a makeshift canopy and 2 vacuum cleaners.

The large shipping container is located on the southeast corner of the car park adjacent to the landscaped area and behind the sports pitch. The canopy for the car wash, which consists of timber posts and corrugated roof, and the vacuum area is also behind the sports pitch area but slightly further off the boundary.

The access to the car wash utilises the existing access into the car park from Narberth Way furthest from the club building. The applicant has claimed that the car wash is open 7 days a week from 9am – 6pm.

A noise assessment has been submitted as part of the submission.

PLANNING HISTORY

There is no relevant planning history on this site.

POLICY

National Policy Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) December 2024. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It sets out the Government's requirements for the planning system only to the extent that is relevant, proportionate and necessary to do so. The NPPF increases the focus on achieving high quality design and states that it is "fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve".

The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) adds further context to the NPPF and it is intended that the two documents are read together.

Local Policy Guidance

The current local policy is provided within the Coventry Local Plan 2017, which was adopted by Coventry City Council on 6th December 2017. Relevant policy relating to this application is:

Policy DE1: Ensuring High Quality Design

Policy JE5: Location of R&D, Industrial and Storage/Distribution Development

Policy GE3: Biodiversity, Geological, Landscape and Archaeological Conservation

Policy GE4: Tree Protection

Policy AC3: Demand Management

Policy EM4: Flood Risk Management

Policy EM5: Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

Emerging Local Policy Guidance – Local Plan Review Reg 19 Consultation

Local Plan review is currently at Reg 19 consultation. Relevant emerging policy relating to this application is:

Policy GE3: Biodiversity, Geological, Landscape and Archaeological Conservation

Policy GE4: Tree Protection

Policy DE1 Ensuring High Quality Design

Policy JE5: Location of R&D, Industrial and Storage/Distribution Development

CONSULTATION

Non-statutory

No Objections received from:

- Highways

Objections have been received from:

- Environmental Protection

Neighbour consultation

Immediate neighbours and local councillors have been notified of the proposals.

8 letters of objection have been received, raising the following material planning considerations:

- a) The use has increased noise pollution to the detriment of neighbouring amenities, which there is only a hedgerow separating some properties from the equipment generating the noise.
- b) The car wash is used at all hours, before 9am and beyond 6pm.
- c) The use has also increased traffic in the area which adds to the noise generated.
- d) The area already experiences traffic to and from the school during the week and now further traffic due to queuing to get into the car wash.
- e) The increase in traffic using the car wash is a concern in terms of pedestrian safety especially due to there being a school close by.
- f) This use is not suitable in this quiet residential area.

- g) People are using the hedgerow as a toilet when the club is closed as there are not facilities on site.
- h) The appearance of the canopy is simply four wooden posts and a corrugated cover.
- i) Associated banner and flags are an eyesore and not suitable in this residential area.

5 letters of support have been received, raising the following material planning considerations:

- j) The car park is now safer and cleaner with the car wash in place and is a deterrent for antisocial and unwanted activity.

Any further comments received will be reported within late representations.

APPRAISAL

The main issues in determining this application are principle of development, the impact upon the character of the area, the impact upon neighbouring amenity and highway considerations.

Principle of development

With regards to the principle of development policy JE5, Location of R&D, Industrial and Storage/Distribution Development would be relevant. Whilst the use is not a traditional industrial use it is still a commercial use using equipment that is of more an industrial nature than domestic appliances.

Policy JE5 states that “proposals for new general industrial and storage/distribution development (including changes of use and the expansion of existing operations) on all sites (including those allocated under Policy JE2) will also be required to demonstrate that the proposed development would not result in significant harm to the amenities of persons occupying nearby residential property or other land occupied by uses sensitive to environmental pollution”.

As this use is located in a predominately residential area and is of more commercial nature which introduces noise and disturbance that results in significant harm to the amenities of neighbouring residents the principle of the development is not considered to be acceptable and is contrary to policy JE5 of the Local Plan.

The exact impact upon the neighbouring amenities is explored further in this report.

Impact on visual amenity

Policy DE1 of the Local Plan seeks to ensure high quality design and development proposals must respect and enhance their surroundings and positively contribute towards the local identity and character of an area.

The car wash at present has a steel shipping container located on site with makeshift canopy which are harmful to the appearance of the site and its surroundings. The agent has indicated on the plans that the shipping container could be clad in timber and that the canopy could have an aluminium frame to improve the appearance of the structures, however there is no further information provided to support these comments, and the structures have been in place since March with little effort made to visually enhance them.

Therefore, as this is a retrospective application we are considering the structures that are already in place which the applicant is seeking to retain as part of this application. Due to the temporary and makeshift appearance of the structures, they result in detrimental impact, upon the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area contrary to policy DE1 of the Local Plan.

The letters of support indicate that the car wash has led to the site being kept free from fly tipping and antisocial behaviour, but this does not warrant the siting of substandard structures and containers to be located on site instead, nor a use which is detrimental to neighbouring amenities.

The banners and flags which align the Narberth Road advertising the car wash are not appropriate within this residential area and result in visual clutter upon the highway. However, these adverts would require separate advertising consent and therefore are not part of this assessment but for clarity would not be supported in their numbers and appearance as they would be contrary to policy DE1 of the Local Plan.

Impact on residential amenity

Following on from the principle of the development section of this report policy JE5(3) clearly states that new industrial uses, including the change of use of land, will be required to demonstrate that proposed development would not result in significant harm to the amenities of persons occupying nearby residential property or other land occupied by uses sensitive to environmental pollution.

The application was accompanied by a noise assessment, following the request by officers at validation stage. The noise report had assessed two scenarios in relation to the use, 1 without mitigation and 2 with mitigation. Mitigation measures included in the report consist of acoustic screening around the car wash with a roof also included. In both scenarios the report concluded that there would be significant adverse impact on the nearest sensitive receptor, those residents in Elizabeth Way, due to the uplift in noise generated from the use over and above that of the background noise of the area.

The Council's Environment Protection Officer has assessed the noise report and indicated that

"the noise report predicts a significant adverse impact of +13dB over background at the nearest receptors even with mitigation measures in place.

The report attempts to justify this by suggesting a noise management plan and that suburban type noise would mask the impact. However, I find it likely that (1) given the character of the noise is different to background type noise at this relatively quiet residential location away from busy roads, and (2) that a noise management plan alone is capable of reducing noise levels sufficiently to reduce likelihood of complaints (neither is this quantified in the report).

Given the significant adverse impact, I consider the development as currently unsuitable at this location"

The equipment used for the car wash would be generating the most noise from the site, however the presence of the car wash would attract more vehicle movements in this location throughout the day and therefore the associated general disturbance of engines running and the opening and closing of doors would add to the detrimental impact.

The objections received from residents in close proximity to the car wash commenting on the disturbance of the use and noise emanating from the site is evidence that this use is resulting in an adverse impact upon the amenities of neighbours which marries up with the findings of the report and the comments of the EP officer. Taking this into account it is therefore considered the car wash use is contrary to policy JE5 of the Local Plan 2017 and should be refused.

Highway considerations

Policy AC3 of the Local Plan acknowledges that the provision of car parking can influence occurrences of inappropriate on-street parking which can block access routes for emergency, refuse and delivery vehicles, block footways preventing access for pedestrians, reduce visibility at junctions and impact negatively on the street scene. Proposals for the provision of car parking associated with new development will be assessed on the basis of parking standards set out in Appendix 5. The car parking standards also include requirements for the provision of electric car charging and cycle parking infrastructure.

The car wash, storage container and associated works are located towards the far corner of the site leaving an area of approximately 35 metres between the car wash and highway. The highway officers have reviewed the plans and visited the site and are of the opinion that this is sufficient space for cars to wait off the highway whilst awaiting their car to be cleaned, therefore it is unlikely to result in a severe impact upon the highway network as a result and have no objections to the scheme.

Taking the above into account the proposals would comply with policy AC3 of the Local Plan despite the objections from residents in terms of the build up of traffic as a result of the use.

Other Considerations

The site is enclosed on two sides by established hedgerow; however the storage container and car wash are located upon existing hardstanding and therefore no significant alterations to the areas within the root protection areas has been undertaken.

As the area is an existing car park there and the use has not resulted in any loss of vegetation the proposals would be exempt from biodiversity net gain.

Taking into account the proposals would not be contrary to policies GE3 and GE4 of the Local Plan 2017.

Equality Implications

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 created the public sector equality duty. Section 149 states:-

(1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Officers have taken this into account and given due regard to this statutory duty, and the matters specified in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 in the determination of this application.

There are no known equality implications arising directly from this development.

Conclusion

The siting and use of the car wash and associated facilities result in an unacceptable level of noise and disturbance from the equipment/machinery together with the associated comings and goings of vehicles resulting in a significant adverse impact upon residential amenities of adjacent residents, particularly in Elizabeth Way contrary to the development plan policies DE1 and JE5. Such harm is considered to be significant and outweigh any suggested benefits of the scheme as a whole. The reason for Coventry City Council refusing planning permission is because the development is in contrary to: Policies DE1 and JE5 of the Coventry Local Plan 2017 and the emerging Local Plan Policies together with the aims of the NPPF.

CONDITIONS / REASON FOR REFUSAL

The retention of the car wash and associated structures and container is considered contrary to Policies DE1 and JE5 of the Coventry Local Plan 2017 and the emerging Local Plan by reason of the siting and use of the car wash and associated facilities which result in an unacceptable level of noise and disturbance

1. from the equipment/machinery together with the associated comings and goings of vehicles resulting in a significant adverse impact upon residential amenities of adjacent residents, particularly in Elizabeth Way. Furthermore, the shipping container and makeshift canopy is considered harmful to the visual amenity of the locality and to the predominantly residential character of the area.