

This statement has been prepared to support a planning application for the change of use of the site to a mixed leisure use comprising a car storage facility (expansion of chauffeur business), Japanese themed café/bar and interactive entertainment space.

The development comprises:

- A small-scale social lounge serving premium refreshments (including alcohol)
- A recreational offer including arcade installations and darts
- A space to store and showcase our car (used in chauffeur business)

The concept is a hybrid leisure venue, not a traditional high street café or bar, and requires:

- Flexible internal layout
- Lower surrounding residential sensitivity
- Adequate space for entertainment/car installations

A review of alternative locations has been undertaken, focusing on:

- South Shields Town Centre
- Newcastle
- Sunderland

Assessment of Alternative Sites

Town Centre Locations

While the town centre offers footfall, sites are generally:

- Smaller in size/not appropriate for car storage
- Surrounded by residential uses (creating noise constraints)
- Higher in rental cost

These factors limit the viability of the proposed mixed entertainment use.

Edge-of-Centre Locations:

Limited availability of suitable vacant units of sufficient size and layout has been identified. Units are typically configured for retail rather than mixed leisure use.

The application site is considered appropriate because:

- It provides sufficient internal space for combined uses
- It is separated from sensitive residential areas
- It allows for a flexible leisure format not suited to traditional centres

Here is a list of alternative spaces that we have reviewed and the reasons they were not suitable:

24 Maxell Street, Western Approach

The landlord is seeking to retain the unit for industrial purposes and has expressed reluctance to permit any change of use. As a result, the property remains vacant despite ongoing efforts to find a suitable tenant.

Commercial Road, South Shields

The landlord was enthusiastic about the business proposal and expressed a willingness to proceed. However, the inability to obtain permission to serve alcohol meant the site could not fulfil the operational requirements, ultimately making it unsuitable for our intended use.

Rekentyke Industrial Estate, South Shields

The landlord did not permit any motor trades, which limited the potential uses for the premises and contributed to its unsuitability for our requirements.

Bedesway, Jarrow

The landlord did not permit any motor trades, which limited the potential uses for the premises and contributed to its unsuitability for our requirements.

Iron City Motorcycles, Simonside Industrial Estate

This was a sublet, and the current tenants were unwilling to sublet to a new business. They expressed a preference for maintaining the unit's use consistent with its existing operations, which prevented any alternative proposals from being considered.

Station Approach, East Boldon

Unfortunately, this unit was already under offer when we approached the landlord, meaning there was no opportunity for further negotiation or consideration of alternative proposals at that time.

Unit 6 Victoria Road, Hebburn

The landlord did not permit any motor trades, which limited the potential uses for the premises and contributed to its unsuitability for our requirements.

190-206 Roker Avenue, Sunderland

Unfortunately, this unit was already under offer when we approached the landlord, meaning there was no opportunity for further negotiation or consideration of alternative proposals at that time.

Hawick Crescent, Newcastle upon Tyne

The landlord did not permit any motor trades, which limited the potential uses for the premises and contributed to its unsuitability for our requirements.

Westgate Road, Newcastle upon Tyne

Unfortunately, this did not meet the size/ access or parking requirements necessary to suit our business operations. As a result, we were unable to pursue this property further.

Newcastle Quays Retail Park

Although the footfall and location were positive, the opening hours were not suitable, and rent/service charges were too high to make this a viable option. These constraints significantly impacted the feasibility of proceeding with this property, despite its otherwise favourable aspects.

The proposed application site has been actively marketed for employment uses for a period of approximately two months through a commercial agent.

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During this time, the property has been made available for uses falling within established employment classes, with appropriate marketing exposure. Despite this, there has been a clear lack of meaningful interest, with no prospective occupiers progressing to a stage where terms could be agreed or a viable proposal put forward. This early lack of engagement is considered indicative of limited demand for the premises in its current form and use class.

It is acknowledged that a longer marketing period is typically preferred to robustly demonstrate a lack of demand for employment uses, particularly within designated industrial areas. However, the absence of interest during the initial marketing period, combined with the specific characteristics of the unit, suggests that its attractiveness for traditional industrial or employment purposes is limited. In contrast, the proposed use represents a viable and deliverable opportunity to bring the premises into active and beneficial use.

We have undertaken an extensive search for suitable premises (see above) to accommodate the proposed use, with careful consideration given to size, layout,

location, and compatibility with the nature of the business. Opportunities that meet these requirements are limited, and the application site represents a rare and appropriate fit for the operational needs of the proposed social lounge and entertainment offer. As such, there is a clear commercial need to secure the unit within a reasonable timeframe. Delaying progression of the proposal to allow for a prolonged marketing period would introduce a significant risk of losing the premises.

Furthermore, the proposed development will deliver tangible economic and social benefits. Once operational and in accordance with a robust business plan, the venue will create employment opportunities aligned with business growth and operational demand. In addition, we intend to establish links with alternative education provision, offering opportunities for young people to gain exposure to and experience within a real business environment. This approach will support skills development, employability, and community engagement, further enhancing the wider benefits of the proposal beyond the immediate use of the site.