

VN222352 – THE CLIMBING HANGAR, READING POST APPLICATION

Vectos Response to Reading Borough Council (RBC) Transport Development Control

Introduction

Vectos has been commissioned by Grip-UK Ltd to consider the highways and transport issues relating to a planning application for the change of use from land use class E(g)(iii) (light industrial) to an indoor climbing centre (Use Class E(d)), at Unit 8a Stadium Trade and Business Park, Reading, RG30 6BX.

This Transport Note constitutes the response by Vectos (as appointed Transport Consultant) to the comments made by the Reading Borough Council (RBC) Transport Development Control on the 22nd June 2022, in relation to planning application reference 220463 and the following proposal:

Change of use of vacant unit to use as an indoor climbing centre (Use Class E(d)), minor amendments to building elevations/entrances, provision of cycle/bin store and associated works at Unit 8a Stadium Way Reading, RG30 6BX.

The Consultation Response issued by RBC Transport Development Control is provided as **Appendix A** for ease of reference.

As part of the planning application Vectos prepared a Transport Statement dated March 2022, providing the relevant detail with respect to site accessibility, highway safety, vehicular and pedestrian access, trip generation, parking and servicing arrangements.

Response to Comments

This Transport Note is structured along the lines of the comments by RBC Highways, addressing each query in sequence. RBC Highways comments are in uppercase black type and each Vectos response is in blue type.

THE MAXIMUM CAPACITY OF THE BUILDING

Data has been collected from the operational Climbing Hangar site in Exeter. The Exeter site is considered to be broadly comparable in terms of size and location to that of this proposal site, therefore it is anticipated that the proposed Reading facility will operate in a similar manner.

It is understood from Grip-UK Ltd that typical duration of visits by members to their climbing centres is around one hour, and during a peak period on a weekday (between 6 and 7 pm) the entry numbers at the Exeter facility are up to

45 users in an hour, as shown in **Figure 1**. A comparable level of occupation is expected for the proposed Reading facility.

PROPOSED TIMES OF OPERATION AND LENGTH OF SESSIONS

The site will be open between the following hours:

- Monday – Friday: 6.30pm – 10pm.
- Saturday – Sunday: 9am – 8pm.

It is understood that there will be no set session times. There will be a limited number of bookable coached sessions that run in the evenings after 6pm when most other businesses on the estate will not be in operation, but otherwise it will be open access for members.

AGE GROUPS

Information on the age demographic of climbing members has been collected from operational Climbing Hangar facilities throughout the UK. As is shown in **Table 1**, the majority of users are between the ages of 18 and 29 (which makes up around 65% of members). It is understood that a high proportion of the customer demographic is students, for whom car ownership is lower as the costs are prohibitive for the majority of students.

Age Bracket	Members
5 – 17	10%
18 – 29	65%
30 – 36	9%
37+	16%

Table 1 – Age Range of Climbing Hangar Members / Users

LEVELS OF OCCUPATION THROUGHOUT THE DAY

Data on arrival numbers has been collected from the operational Climbing Hangar site in Exeter. This analysis gives a daily entry profile of visitors and indication of the level of occupation throughout the day as the average length of stay is around one hour. **Figures 1 and 2** show the average weekday and weekend entry numbers respectively.

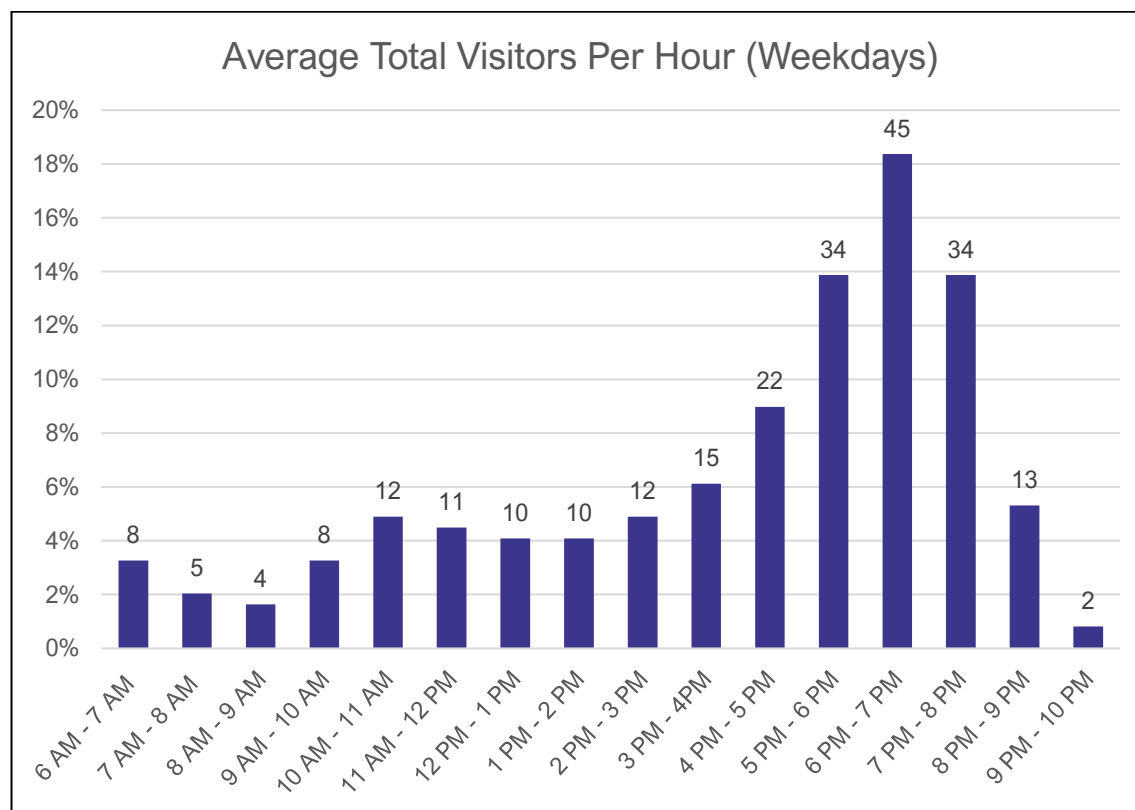


Figure 1 – Average Total Visitors Per Hour (Weekdays)

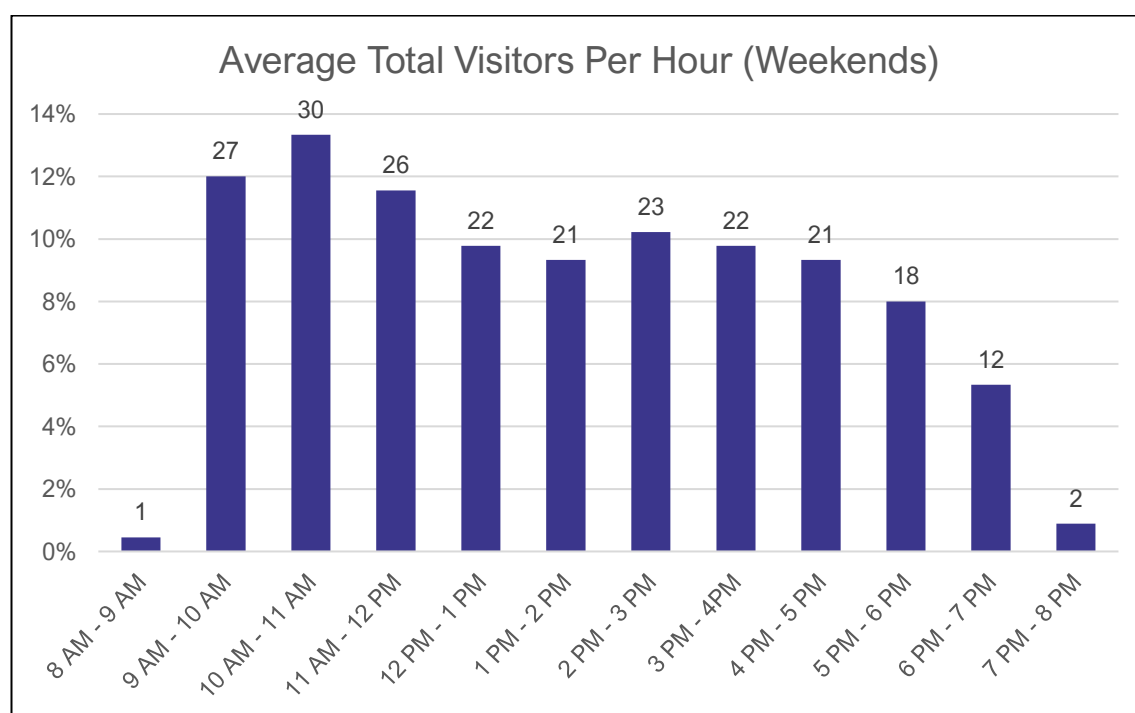


Figure 2 – Average Total Visitors Per Hour (Weekends)

As is shown during the weekday there is a peak period between 5pm – 8pm where around 46% of daily weekday users arrive within this 3-hour early evening window. The peak hour is between 6pm – 7pm where 45 members arrive.

During the weekend arrivals at the site are much more even throughout the day, with a maximum of 30 visitors arriving between 10am – 11am.

A comparable daily profile of visitors is expected for the proposed Reading facility.

HOW MANY STAFF WILL BE ON-SITE AT ANY ONE TIME, DURING TIMETABLED SESSIONS (WEEKDAY, EVENING & WEEKEND)

Table 2 shows a breakdown of the number of staff that will be on-site across a typical day.

Period	No. Staff
Weekday Mornings	3 – 4 Staff Members
Weekday Afternoons	3 – 4 Staff Members
Weekday Evenings	3 – 4 Staff Members
Weekends	5 – 6 Staff Members
During Timetabled Sessions	No changes to the above

Table 2 – Proposed Staff Numbers

All staff at Climbing Centre locations are encouraged to travel to / from the sites via sustainable modes, with staff members recruited locally where possible. All members of staff will be climbing specialists, and with climbing a lifestyle sport staff are generally environmentally conscious and many do not own a car.

ARE THERE LIKELY TO BE EVENTS WHERE PEOPLE TRAVEL TO COMPETE IN COMPETITIONS?

There will be no regional or national competitions undertaken at the site whereby people would travel into the premises. There could be some social event sessions that would run on Friday evenings (after 6pm), but these will not attract additional members as they are aimed at enabling interactions and making new connections between different climbers.

WOULD THE BUILDING BE AVAILABLE FOR PRIVATE BOOKINGS (i.e. PARTIES)

Grip-UK Ltd have confirmed that the site will at no time be available for private bookings.

HAS A PARKING MANAGEMENT PLAN BEEN PREPARED TO ENSURE THE BUSINESS OPERATIONS DO NOT OVERSPILL

A parking management plan is not considered as necessary for this application, for the following reasons discussed in more detail.

Reason 1: Suitable on-site parking provision will be provided

The proposed Reading climbing facility will have a site area of approximately 14,500sq. ft (1,350sq.m) and will be provided with a total of 16 allocated parking spaces.

Anticipated travel / parking behaviours associated with the proposal site have been subject to further analysis by assessing parking demand at the operational Climbing Hangar site in Exeter (Site Location: 6 Marsh Green Road, North Exeter, Devon EX2 8NY). The Exeter site is considered to be broadly comparable to the proposal site at Reading in terms of access / proximity to alternative sustainable modes, and also it operates in an existing industrial estate setting. The Exeter facility is 16,100sq. ft and has a total of 15 allocated car parking spaces.

A parking beat survey of the Exeter site was undertaken on a typical weekday (Friday 8th July 2022) and weekend day (Saturday 9th July 2022), to understand parking demand and the daily parking profile of this operational Climbing Hangar site. The parking survey results are presented in **Table 3** below, with the raw parking survey data presented as **Appendix B**. The parking survey was supplemented by a site visit undertaken on Friday 15th July 2022 between 1645 and 1815, to observe access to / from the site and parking conditions in the vicinity on Marsh Green Road.

Time	Parking Occupancy - Friday 8th July 2022	Parking Occupancy – Saturday 9th July 2022
06:30	13	
07:00	10	
08:00	3	
09:00	7	14
10:00	10	11
11:00	13	15
12:00	8	15
13:00	8	11
14:00	10	6
15:00	10	6
16:00	10	4
17:00	15	5
18:00	14	3
19:00	12	1
20:00	6	
21:00	0	

Table 3 – Climbing Hangar Exeter Parking Survey Results

The data presented in **Table 3**, along with observations from the site visit, have been utilised to inform the suitability of the 16 car parking spaces at the proposed Reading facility and to demonstrate that this level of car parking provision is appropriate to serve the site. As discussed, the Exeter facility is comparable to that of the proposal site

location and it is understood that Climbing Hangar locations are chosen to serve the needs of existing climbing communities, therefore it is appropriate to assume that the Reading site will operate in a similar way in terms of associated travel characteristics. Hence, the below conclusions on anticipated parking demand can be deduced.

During a typical weekday the proposed 16 on-site spaces could be fully occupied between 5pm – 6pm only, therefore there would only be a very short period during the day of up to one hour when some overspill parking could potentially occur. Applying the data presented in **Figure 1**, between the hours of 5pm – 6pm there would be around 34 members arriving. Applying the robust assumption that around 50% of these members would drive and park, there would be one vehicle potentially overspilling onto the wider estate / highway for this short duration. The time at which this overspill could occur would be outside of the peak operational hours of most other businesses on the estate, hence it is considered that wider parking within the estate would be available. It has been confirmed by Grip-UK Ltd that Unit 8a has permission to use the wider parking in the estate during times when the adjacent businesses are closed.

During a typical weekend day the proposed parking provision could be fully occupied for a period of two hours, between 11am – 1pm. Again, this is a short period of time where overspill parking could occur. Using the data presented in **Figure 2**, during the hours of 11am – 12pm and 12pm – 1pm there could be 26 and 22 arrivals respectively. Applying the robust assumption that 50% of users would drive and park, there would be no overspill parking onto the wider estate / highway during this period. It is important to note that a number of local businesses within the estate are not operational past 12pm on Saturday and will be closed fully on Sunday, hence there would likely be wider parking opportunities within the estate during peak weekend times.

In addition, local conditions in the form of parking controls in the immediate surrounding area, along with the lack of suitable on-street parking opportunities on the roads around the Stadium Trade and Business Park, will help minimise the occurrence of any overspill / off-site parking by The Climbing Hangar users.

Observations from the late afternoon site visit undertaken on Friday 15th July 2022 at the Exeter site showed a relatively low number of arrivals to the site, but the proportion of car drive and park trips that were captured was low compared to the volume of inbound pedestrian and cycle trips, as summarised below.

Exeter Site Arrivals (1645-1815)	In	Out
Cycles	7	3
Cars	9	8
Pedestrians	19	7

There is a combination of double and single (no parking Monday to Saturday 8am and 6pm) yellow parking restrictions in the vicinity of the site on Marsh Green Road and the majority of cars parked associated with surrounding business uses, which minimise the opportunities for overspill parking on the adjacent highway network by Climbing Hangar members.

To summarise, applying behaviours evidenced from the operational Climbing Hangar site in Exeter, the provision of 16 spaces is considered appropriate to accommodate expected weekday and weekend parking demand, without resulting in any significant overspill parking onto the adjoining highway network and any associated safety conflicts.

Reason 2: Parking monitoring system

The wider estate at the Stadium Trade and Business Park has an Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) technology management system, whereby car parking is monitored in order to ensure that there is no unauthorised / unsafe / inappropriate parking activity. Upon entry into the estate each car registration is logged by a camera. Users parking on-site will register their vehicle via a 'whitelist' email address / online portal that is setup for each occupier. The Climbing Hangar will be provided with an iPad linked to the system to enable registration by users on arrival, or details will be provided so users can register their vehicle to park on-site ahead of their visit. There are a total of 86 notices around the site clearly warning people of the operation of the ANPR system and how it works.

Those parking on the estate that have just parked and left a car without registration will receive a fine, with the fine doubling if it is not paid within a certain number of days.

Outside of the operational hours of the other businesses on the estate the wider car parking within the trade and business park will be available for use for visitors of the premises, subject to registration of their car details on arrival as per the ANPR management system that is detailed above.

All Climbing Hangar members will be subject to an induction before they can use the facility. In the induction session, details of the available on-site parking and wider estate parking management arrangements including the operation of the ANPR system will be provided.

The Climbing Hangar management team will also undertake regular spot checks to ensure that no user is abusing the parking rules or parking inappropriately in the vicinity of the unit.

To summarise, the monitoring systems and parking protocols that will be in place at the site will prevent unsafe and inappropriate parking practices.

Reason 3: Promotion of sustainable modes

Sustainable modes will be promoted to climbing members (and staff), including information on the excellent on-site cycle parking provision, changing and showering facilities and local public transport options that are available. These sustainable travel options will not only be promoted within the initial induction session, but refreshers / updated information will also be provided at different times throughout the year.

The majority of members will be climbing specialists / enthusiasts, and with climbing a lifestyle sport the users are generally environmentally conscious and many do not own a car.

The Climbing Hangar at Reading will also have strong engagement with initiatives and campaigns to promote environmental change and decrease car travel to / from the site, which is common practice at their other sites.

All of the measures above will help to decrease single occupancy car travel to / from the site, subsequently reducing vehicle movements and parking demand associated with the site.

Conclusion

Vectos has been commissioned by Grip-UK Ltd to consider the highways and transport issues relating to a planning application for the change of use from land use class E(g)(iii) (light industrial) to an indoor climbing centre (Use Class E(d)), at Unit 8a Stadium Trade and Business Park, Reading, RG30 6BX.

It is considered that the Highways comments provided by RBC Transport Development Control in response to planning application reference 220463 have been addressed by Vectos in this Transport Note.

In terms of car parking, it has been demonstrated that the provision of 16 allocated spaces is appropriate to accommodate expected weekday and weekend parking demand, without resulting in any significant overspill parking effects and any associated highway safety conflicts, and there would not be a severe impact.

This additional information has provided further assurance that the proposed development of an indoor climbing centre is in accordance with national and local transport planning policy, and therefore should not be refused on transport and highways grounds.

Appendix A

RBC Highway Comments

Memo

From: (e)Transport Development Control Floor 1 North Rear Civic Offices Bridge Street Reading RG1 2LU
To: Connie Davis 72413 Connie.Davis@reading.gov.uk
Date: 22 June 2022
Re: Consultation on Planning Application

Application Number: 220463

Application Type: Full Planning Approval

Address: Unit 8a Stadium Way Reading RG30 6BX

Proposal: Change of use of vacant unit to use as an indoor climbing centre (Use Class E(d)), minor amendments to building elevations/entrances, provision of cycle/bin storage and associated works

This site is located in an industrial area and is served from Stadium Way, which is an industrial estate service road. A high proportion of the traffic using the road is commercial traffic ranging from light vans to articulated lorries. There is high demand for parking in the area.

This application is for the change of use of vacant unit to use as an indoor climbing centre at Unit 8 Stadium Way. The proposal will utilise 1,350sq.m of floor space (1,240sq.m ground floor and 110sq.m mezzanine) and will consist of Climbing Space and Café / community area with ancillary management office, reception, staff room. The proposal includes 16 car parking spaces and 24 cycle parking spaces (12 external spaces and 12 internal spaces).

The site is accessed from Stadium Way in the north, which forms a priority junction with Scours Lane and wider vehicle access is via the Scours Lane/Oxford Road priority T-junction. It is proposed the indoor climbing centre will operate during the following times with potential for up to 15 full-time members of staff and 15 part-time members of staff;

- Monday - Friday: 06.30 to 22:00; and
- Saturday / Sunday: 09:00 - 20:00.

It is stated that the applicant's core audience generally consists of 16 to 45-year olds, ranging from young professionals to families, however the operation is such that it also caters for and accommodates young children as it provides a safe and accessible form of climbing.

Policy TR5 states that development should provide car parking and cycle parking that is appropriate to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport. Local parking standards are set out in the RBC, Revised Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which takes into account the accessibility of the site.

However, there are no adopted parking standards for this specific type of use. Therefore, an application of this type, will be considered on its own merits considering business operations, staffing numbers and anticipated number of customers.

In terms of car parking, the proposal will deliver a total of 16 allocated vehicle bays overall for customers and staff (including disabled parking adjacent to the building entrance) (as per the lease agreement for Unit 8a and as shown on the plans in **Appendix A**).

A Transport Statement has been submitted to support the application, however, further information is required regarding the operation of the business given that the TRICS analysis is based on an indoor playcentre and not directly comparable in terms of staffing numbers and clientele.

In order to assess the application, the following information is requested;

1. The maximum capacity of the building
2. Proposed timetable (weekday, evening, weekend) including the maximum number of participant's at any one time, age group and length of session.
3. How many staff will be on-site at any one time, during timetabled sessions (weekday, evening, weekend)
4. Are there likely to be events where people travel to compete in competitions?
5. Would the building be available for private bookings (i.e parties)
6. Has a Parking Management Plan been prepared to ensure the business operations do not overspill.

The site has a limited amount of parking provision and the concern is that this proposal will generate indiscriminate parking/conflicting traffic movements in an area with high levels of commercial traffic. Paragraph 4.11 states that the majority of other businesses within the trade park are operational in traditional business hours and therefore the wider car parking is not expected to be fully utilised during later evening and weekend times when The Climbing Hangar will be open. Therefore, can the applicant confirm that the Unit 8 has permission to use these additional spaces.

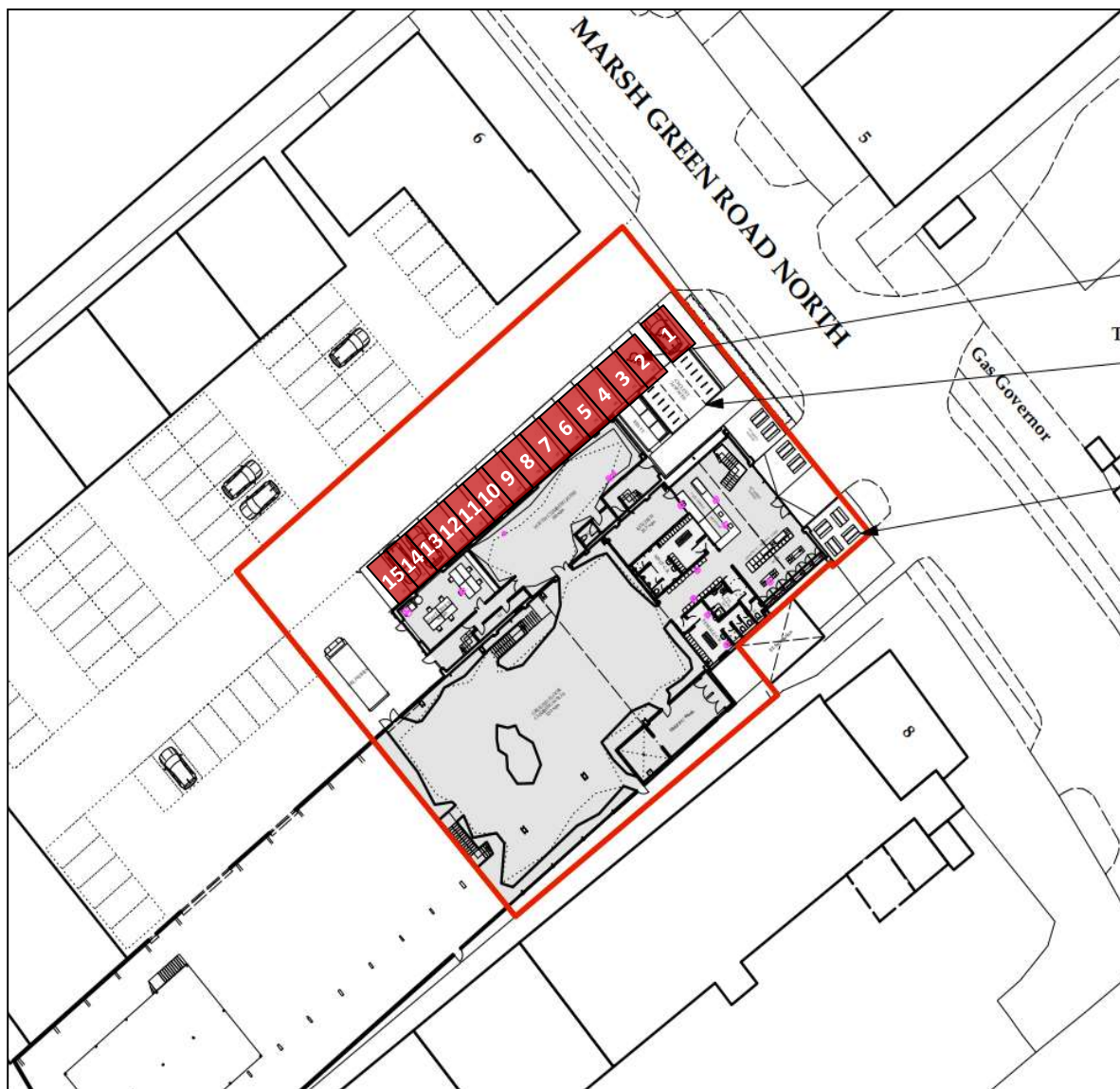
Therefore, additional information is required to address the points above before I can recommend approval for the proposed change of use.

Regards

Transport Development Control
Transport | Environment & Neighbourhood Services

Appendix B

Parking Survey Results



Designated Parking : 15

(Parking Survey: 15 marked bays plus unmarked area)

[Survey Date]

Day 1 Fri, 8th July 2022 06:30-22:00 (15.5hrs)

Day 2 Sat, 9th July 2022 09:00-20:00 (11hrs)

[Classifications]

- 1 Car, van, car + trailer
- 2 Two axle rigid
- 3 Three axle rigid
- 4 Four axle rigid
- 5 Two axle rigid + trailer
- 6 Three axle rigid + trailer
- 7 Artic, two axle tractor unit + one axle semi-trailer
- 8 Artic two axle tractor unit + two axle semi-trailer
- 9 Artic, two axle tractor unit + three axle semi-trailer
- 10 Artic, three axle tractor unit + one or two axle semi-trailer
- 11 Artic, three axle tractor unit + three axle semi-trailer
- 12 Bus or coach

Location The Climbing Hanger (6 Marsh Green Road, Exeter)
Date Fri, 8th July 2022 / Sat, 9th July 2022
Survey Time 06:30-22:00 (15.5hrs) / 09:00-20:00 (11hrs)
Description Designated Parking Spaces Summary



Occupancy (%)		
Day	Day 1	Day 2
	Fri, 8th July 2022	Sat, 9th July 2022
Designated Parking Spaces	15 spaces	15 spaces
Occupancy Rate	41%	26%

Occupancy (Vehicles)		
Day	Day 1	Day 2
	Fri, 8th July 2022	Sat, 9th July 2022
Time	15 spaces	15 spaces
06:30	13	
07:00	10	
08:00	3	
09:00	7	
10:00	10	11
11:00	13	15
12:00	8	15
13:00	8	11
14:00	10	6
15:00	10	6
16:00	10	4
17:00	15	5
18:00	14	3
19:00	12	1
20:00	6	
21:00	0	

