

Application No: 14/0656M

Location: Aldi Store, Brook Street, Knutsford, Cheshire, WA16 8BN

Proposal: Proposed Car Park extension to existing foodstore and minor change to existing car park layout.

Applicant: B Richards, Aldi Store UK Ltd

Expiry Date: 14-Apr-2014

Date Report Prepared: 28 May 2014

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE subject to conditions

MAIN ISSUES

- Principle of additional car parking on the site
- The impact upon highway safety
- The impact upon trees of amenity value
- The impact upon the amenity of neighbouring property
- The impact upon the character of the area
- The impact upon heritage assets

REASON FOR REPORT

The application has been called in by Councillor Gardiner due to concerns regarding the impact on highway safety. As such, the application is to be determined by the Northern Planning Committee.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

The application site is part of an irregular piece of land containing a number of trees located to the south of the existing Aldi Store – there is an existing point of access and the site is boarded off from the remainder of the food store site. On the original permission it was denoted as a site for future development. This additional land did contain two residential properties which were also recently demolished.

The Aldi Store is located on the northern side of Brook Street towards the south east of the town centre. The site area is 0.62 hectares and the site is bounded by an existing garage and the railway line to the north, by St Cross Church and residential properties on Branden Drive at an elevated level to the east and Brook Street and the listed nursery building to the south. The site did previously contain a number of buildings including a two storey office building, a single storey industrial building, a residential property as well as areas of hardstanding for parking. The buildings were demolished following the granting of consent for an earlier

application in 2010. Vehicular access to the site is currently available off King Street and Brook Street. The site contains a number of trees.

Part of the Aldi store site is located within the Knutsford Town Centre and the Knutsford Town Centre Conservation Area.

The application site itself lies outside of the town centre boundary and lies within a designated Predominantly Residential Area.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

This application seeks full planning permission for a car park extension to the existing foodstore for an additional 16 spaces and minor changes to the existing car park layout which involve losing a car parking space to the side of the nursery to provide new footpath tarmac.

Planning History

10/2460m Construction of New Foodstore with Associated Parking and Servicing Facilities. Approved 09-Dec-2010

12/0275m Variation of Conditions 2, 17 & 18 to Approved Application 10/2460M Approved 16-Jul-2012

12/4266m Variation of Condition 25 to Approved 12/0275M (Development to be carried out in accordance with the second Bat/Badger survey dated May/June 2009) Approved 16-Jan-2014

POLICIES

Macclesfield Borough Local Plan – Saved Policies

BE1 – Design Guidance
BE2 – Preservation of Historic Fabric
BE3 – Conservation Areas
BE16– Setting of Listed Buildings
T3- Pedestrians
DC1 – Design: New Build
DC3 – Amenity
DC6 – Circulation and Access
DC8 - Landscaping
DC9 – Tree Protection

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version

Paragraph 216 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that, unless other material considerations indicate otherwise, decision-takers may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

- The stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced the preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
- The extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and
- The degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the NPPF (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).

In view of the level of consultation already afforded to the plan-making process, together with the degree of consistency with national planning guidance, it is appropriate to attach enhanced weight to the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy - Submission Version in the decision-making process.

At its meeting on the 28th February 2014, the Council resolved to approve the *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version* for publication and submission to the Secretary of State. It was also resolved that this document be given weight as a material consideration for Development Management purposes with immediate effect.

The relevant policies are as follows:

MP1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
 PG2 – Settlement Hierarchy
 SD1 – Sustainable Development in Cheshire East
 SD2 – Sustainable Development Principles
 SE1 – Design
 SE2 – Efficient Use of Land
 SE4 – The Landscape
 SE5 – Trees, Hedgerow and Woodland
 SE7 – The Historic Environment
 CO1 – Sustainable Travel and Transport
 CO4 – Travel Plans and Transport Assessments

Other Material Considerations

Ministerial Statement – Planning for Growth
 National Planning Policy Framework
 Planning Practice Guidance

CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

None received

VIEWS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

The Council **objects** on the grounds that this application, if approved, would serve to prejudice the ability of the remainder of the land around it to be developed. As such the application is considered premature until a comprehensive scheme to develop the whole site can be brought forward. Therefore KTC recommends that the application should **be refused**.

The Council further raises concerns regarding pedestrian safety; the safe crossing at the main entrance onto Brook St and failure to fully meet the requirements of the Equality Act and Part M of the Building Regulations in respect of best practice with regard to the previous application.

The Council requests that if the application is approved that a feature ~~is~~ should be installed; which pays due regard to the Caesar's Place cottages which formerly occupied the site.

Furthermore the Council request that if the application is approved the surfacing is a of permeable material.

OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

Letters of representation have been received from 5 households. All of these letters either raise concern or object to the proposal on the following grounds:

- Concerns regarding a failure to provide a Travel Plan
- Concerns regarding footpaths
- Concerns regarding failure to close bus stop
- Concerns regarding existing layout of the car park
- Concerns regarding pedestrian safety
- Concerns new access would create a bottleneck and additional highway safety problems
- Suggest turned into a Pay and Display car park for the town
- Impact of car park on the Conservation Area
- Concerns regarding consultation arrangements
- Impact on trees
- Impact on neighbouring amenity
- Conduct of Aldi

Knutsford Conservation and Heritage Group object on the following grounds:

Any extension of the car park would probably preclude the possibility of using the land for other purposes, such as housing. At present, the disposition of parking spaces is so arranged as to cause obstruction when cars are leaving (especially reversing) out of spaces on either side of the exit/entrance. The design should be re-configured to facilitate the smooth flow of vehicles and reduce the possibility of disturbance to traffic movement along the main road. It is extremely regrettable that Aldi were party to the unapproved demolition of a row of cottages of significant historical importance (Caesars Place). The removal of these buildings, together with surrounding trees, has robbed the town of a valuable visual amenity and replaced it with a with a building and car park which are unsympathetic with the adjacent Conservation Area. Aldi have made no offer of redress and Knutsford Conservation and Heritage Group (KCHG) strongly recommend that some recognition of the former dwellings should be made, after consultation with local bodies such as Knutsford Town Council and ourselves. If the Planning Application is approved then a condition should be that Aldi must make every effort to mitigate the visual impact by judicious use of landscaping such as planting substantial trees and shrubs. They should not merely pay lip device to this principle.

APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The following documents have been submitted on behalf of the applicant:

Cover Letter

Explains that the existing car parking numbers are inadequate hence the application for additional spaces. In addition, the applicant considers that the pedestrian footway to the side of the nursery linking to Brook Street exits at a point of limited visibility and they are concerned that a child may run along the footway towards the store and straight out into the road. They consider that this situation could be improved by the installation of a low stainless steel barrier around one of the car parking spaces resulting in the loss of the said car parking space.

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

The site lies within the settlement boundary of Knutsford outside of the town centre boundary and outside the Conservation Area. The site also lies within a predominantly residential area.

In principle, as Aldi contend that the car park extension is necessary for their operational requirements, and would therefore support the improvement of their business, the presumption in favour of economic growth indicates that there would be a presumption in favour of development.

Permission should only be refused where any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

Highway Implications

The proposed changes would see an increase in car parking spaces from 91 to 105 which is a modest increase of 15 spaces. The car parking standards in the Local Plan and the emerging standards indicate that 96 spaces would be recommended for a store of this size. The proposal alleviates the slight shortfall in spaces that currently exist against the emerging standard and provides an excess of 9 spaces. No objection is raised to the provision of 9 spaces above the guideline recommendation of 96 spaces for this site.

Concern has been raised about the lack of a travel plan required under application 10/2460M. This is valid concern and officers are investigating this matter separately. However, the absence of the travel plan is not considered to have any material impact on the assessment of the proposal for the additional parking spaces required.

The store is now operational and therefore a clearer picture of the actual car parking requirements is garnered. Despite the provision of cycle parking, pedestrian links to the town centre and the restrictions to the car park (which restrict it to solely for use by Aldi customers), it is evident that there is not sufficient car parking within the existing car park. The lack of car parking is causing highway safety problems and anecdotal evidence from neighbours within the letters of representation supports this view.

The Travel Plan may help to reduce some car parking trips but given the issues noted above it is not considered that approval of this proposal would counter the objectives of achieving a sustainable travel plan. To ensure every effort is made in respect of sustainable patterns of travel, a condition requiring a new and updated Travel Plan is recommended.

The provision of additional spaces would help to alleviate congestion associated with queuing and would discourage on street car parking in the vicinity of the site.

In addition the changes to the layout are designed to enhance pedestrian safety which would be in accordance with policy T3.

The comments from neighbours in respect of the access creating a bottleneck is duly noted however this point of access has already been approved and is in situ.

Overall it is considered that there are benefits to highway and pedestrian safety resulting from this proposal.

Trees

There are a number of trees on the site although these are scheduled for retention – the proposed car park extension would not encroach into tree protection areas as required, and therefore any impact during construction can be mitigated accordingly. Some new landscape planting is proposed which would soften the edges of the car park extension. The Council's landscape architect has no objections to the proposals.

The comments from neighbours are duly noted however any actions undertaken by the applicants outside of this application are not a matter for consideration here and this application would not prejudice any action the Council may or may not wish to take in this regard.

Amenity

The main concerns in respect of amenity would be the disturbance associated with the new car parking spaces, the disturbance associated with congestion and the disturbance associated with the construction period.

Turning to the new car parking spaces, these would be 30m from the nearest neighbour and separated by boundary fences and trees. Therefore any impact is unlikely to be significant.

The proposals would help to alleviate some of the congestion associated with the operation of the foodstore and therefore would represent an improvement.

A condition would be imposed to ensure disturbance during the construction period would be minimised.

Character of the Area/ Heritage Assets

The site lies outside of the Conservation Area boundary however comprises part of the setting of the Nursery building which is listed.

The comments from KCHG are duly noted however the buildings historically on the site have been demolished and the site no longer has any buildings of historic interest on it. The car park extension comprises the furthest extent of the site which is some distance from this listed building and its curtilage which is affected more by the existing foodstore and car park.

The impact of the proposals on heritage assets is limited.

Turning to the impact upon the character of the area, the site is currently bounded by timber close boarded fencing and the site beyond this contains nothing but a few trees. The car parking would maintain the existing open character and would therefore not have an adverse impact upon the character of the area.

CONCLUSIONS AND REASON(S) FOR THE DECISION

The Framework indicates that proposals should only be refused where the level of harm would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposals. Given that the adverse impacts identified are clearly outweighed by the benefits to highway safety and the proposals would not conflict with those policies within the MBLP which are consistent with The Framework, it is considered that planning permission should be granted as the proposals accord with policies BE1 Design Guidance, BE2 Preservation of Historic Fabric, BE3 Conservation Areas, BE16 Setting of Listed Buildings, T3 Pedestrians, DC1 New Build, DC2 Extensions, DC3 Amenity, DC6 Circulation and Access, DC8 Landscaping, DC9 Tree Protection of the Macclesfield Local Plan 2004 and guidance within The Framework.

The Local Planning Authority (LPA), in reaching this decision, has followed the guidance in paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The Framework advises that the LPA should work proactively with applicants to secure developments that improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.

In the event of any changes being needed to the wording of the Committee's decision (such as to delete, vary or add conditions / informatives / planning obligations or reasons for approval/refusal) prior to the decision being issued, the Planning and Place Shaping Manager has delegated authority to do so in consultation with the Chairman of the Strategic Planning Board, provided that the changes do not exceed the substantive nature of the Committee's decision.

Application for Full Planning

RECOMMENDATION: Approve subject to following conditions

1. A01AP - Development in accord with approved plans
2. A01LS - Landscaping - submission of details
3. A03FP - Commencement of development (3 years)

4. A04LS - Landscaping (implementation)
5. A07HA - No gates - new access
6. A12LS - Landscaping to include details of boundary treatment
7. A22GR - Protection from noise during construction (hours of construction)
8. A23MC - Details of ground levels to be submitted
9. A26HA - Prevention of surface water flowing onto highways
10. A33HA - Details to be approved (i.e. external lighting)
11. car park extension subjected to same hours of operation and restriction as existing car park
12. Travel Plan to be updated

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