

Our Ref:

Your Ref: 2019/0366/FUL

14th December 2021

Ms Helen Leamey
Planning and Development Services
West Lancashire Borough Council
Ormskirk
Lancashire
L39 2DF



Dear Helen

Planning Application Ref. 2019/0366/FUL

Land at Westgate and High Street in Skelmersdale

On Behalf of Aldi Stores Limited

I write in regard to planning application reference **2019/0366/FUL** which was validated by West Lancashire Borough Council ('WLBC') on 4th February 2020 and has been the subject of ongoing negotiations thereafter. The applicant, Aldi Stores Ltd, would like to take this opportunity to amend the scheme which is currently before the Local Planning Authority such that the previously proposed divisible Use Class E 'retail' unit of 372 sq. m is replaced with an equivalently sized Use Class B8 'trade counter' unit. Accordingly, it is proposed that the application's description of development is revised such that it reads as follows:

"Demolition of existing structures and erection of a foodstore (Use Class E(a)) and trade counter unit (Use Class B8) with associated accesses, car parking, servicing area and hard and soft landscaping"

Alongside this minor change to the composition of the scheme, the Local Planning Authority will be aware that in late 2020 the office building which previously occupied the planning application site had to be demolished following an arson attack. Given the change in circumstances with the site and scheme, it has therefore been necessary to revise the supporting application materials where relevant to reflect this. The updated documents and plans have been submitted to the Council electronically and are listed below for reference.

A further reason why the application materials have merited revision is that whilst Aldi's objective remains to bring their latest discount foodstore format to Skelmersdale, so that they can better

meet the needs of Skelmersdale residents from a building capable of providing their full food offer, they have reconsidered their position on their existing Skelmersdale town centre store. They are now proposing to retain their Concourse Centre store (where the current lease runs until the end of 2025), so that there would be no consequential reduction in consumer choice and competition within the town centre should a new Aldi store open at Westgate. This has resulted in a revised approach to both the retail impact and sequential test justifications – which are set out in detail in the Supporting Planning and Retail Statement.

Submission Materials

The revised application submission materials comprise the following documents, plans and other supporting information:

Revised Forms and Correspondence

- A Planning Application Form and Ownership Certificate (Certificate A);
- This Covering Letter summarising the revised submission materials and application proposals.

Revised Reports

- Planning and Retail Statement prepared by Avison Young (November 2021);
- Arboricultural Assessment prepared by Bowland Tree Consultancy (November 2021);
- Design and Access Statement prepared by The Harris Partnership (December 2021);
- Ecological Appraisal prepared by Bowland Ecology (July 2021);
- Flood Risk and Drainage Assessment prepared by Integra (November 2021);
- Drainage Design Philosophy prepared by SWF (November 2021);
- Noise Impact Assessment prepared by BWB Consulting (December 2021);
- Employment Land Market Report prepared by Aherne Property Consultants (November 2021);
- Lighting Scheme Plan prepared by SEM Technology (November 2021);
- Transport Assessment and Travel Plan prepared by Cameron Rose Associates (Nov 21);
- Coal Mining Risk Assessment prepared by Brownfield Solutions Ltd (January 2018);
- Phase 1 Site Investigation prepared by Brownfield Solutions Ltd (January 2018); and,
- Geo-Environmental Assessment Report prepared by Brownfield Solutions Ltd (May 2018).

Revised Plans and Drawings (All November 2021)

- 2269BOL- CGI.01D - Computer Generated Image;
- 2269BOL-110C - Site Location Plan;
- 2269BOL-111C - Existing Site Plan;
- 2269BOL-112L - Proposed Site Plan;
- 2269BOL-113B - Proposed General Arrangement Plan;
- 2269BOL-114E - Proposed Elevations;
- 2269BOL-115B - Proposed Roof Plan;

- 2269BOL-116C - Demolition Plan;
- 2269BOL-117G - Boundary Treatment Plan; and,
- V2269-L01G - Landscape Scheme Plan.

Planning Application Overview

This Planning and Retail Statement has been prepared on behalf of Aldi Stores Limited in support of a 'full' planning application which seeks permission for the erection of a discount foodstore (Use Class E) and a trade counter unit (Use Class B8) with associated access, car parking, servicing area, and hard and soft landscaping on land that the corner of High Street and Westgate in Skelmersdale.

The site's potential for redevelopment is self-evident. It is situated in a prominent location at the corner of High Street and Westgate in western Skelmersdale. It was until recently occupied by a 1960's office building until its enforced demolition in 2021 following an arson attack. The office building was vacant at the time of its demolition and had been since 2016, following the departure of its long-term tenant the Co-operative Group. The building had fallen into disrepair in recent years after extensive efforts to find an alternative office occupier failed and it became an ongoing target for vandalism, break-ins, and anti-social behaviour.

Today the site continues to offer a poor impression of the area. It is largely hoarded off from the public and comprises only the building slab and unmanaged self-seeded vegetation. The land is clearly ripe for redevelopment and the significant investment proposed by Aldi will provide the opportunity to radically improve the appearance and profile of this important site, whilst also creating 40 to 50 full and part-time jobs and enhancing consumer choice within western Skelmersdale – where there currently is no 'main' food shopping destination. The scheme will also facilitate the delivery of a trade counter use (Use Class B8) on a site which is allocated for employment purposes in the Local Plan. This trade counter will create a further 10 to 15 local jobs.

The rationale for Aldi submitting this planning application is that the retailer cannot adequately serve Skelmersdale (a sizable town of some 40,000 people) from their existing store within the Concourse Shopping Centre in Skelmersdale town centre. This is both due to the store's limited size (which has a sales area one third less than Aldi's current foodstore format) and inherent operational constraints associated with the Concourse Centre itself. These include there being no dedicated surface level car parking within easy reach of customers using trolleys – critical for those undertaking a 'bulk' food shopping trip – and reduced operational hours, dictated by the trading hours of the shopping centre.

Accordingly, Aldi's objective is to bring their latest discount foodstore format to Skelmersdale so that they can better meet the needs of Skelmersdale residents from a store which is capable of providing Aldi's full food offer. However, they are also proposing to retain their Concourse Centre store (where the current lease runs until the end of 2025), so that there would be no consequential

reduction in consumer choice and competition within the town centre should a new Aldi store open at Westgate.

The location Aldi has selected for its new Skelmersdale store is in very close proximity (less than 200m) to Sandy Lane local centre, with which it benefits from straightforward and safe pedestrian linkages. Sandy Lane is a relatively large local centre and community hub built as part of Skelmersdale's new town designation in the 1960/70's which contains 17 units (although no 'main' food shopping destination) and takes the form of a two-level covered mall with dedicated car parking. Whilst the centre appears to be fully occupied at ground floor level, it is considered that the provision of a well-connected, edge-of-centre foodstore such as Aldi will significantly boost footfall in the locality, generating spin-off trade for existing Sandy Lane businesses and potentially also attracting new investment in the mall.

The supporting Planning and Retail Statement which accompanies this application clearly demonstrates that the scheme accords with the key policies contained within the adopted Development Plan, key national planning policies, and all other relevant material considerations. Furthermore, it highlights that the application proposals will deliver some very significant positive benefits which weigh heavily in favour of the scheme and are not outweighed by adverse impacts. The application proposals are therefore acceptable in planning terms and it is respectfully requested that planning permission is granted.

Summary

I trust that the revised information provided is sufficient to enable you to determine this planning application. However, if you require any further details, please do not hesitate to contact me. In the meantime, I await your confirmation that the information has been downloaded successfully, and I shall contact you in the near future to discuss the timescale and means of determining the application.

Yours sincerely



D
Associate Director

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For and on behalf of Avison Young (UK) Limited