

**1A Hylton Grange, Sunderland,
SR5 3HR**

Retail Impact Assessment (RIA)

Cliff Court (Redcar) Developments

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LICHFIELDS

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This RIA is to assess the impact of the proposed development for the change of use including partial demolition of existing vacant ICI Dulux Decorator Centre to form 2 individual Units (Class E), and formation of new drive-thru lane on the Local and District Centres of Sunderland. The report will assess the impact of the proposal upon town centre viability and vitality.
- 1.2 Description of the Proposal: change of use including partial demolition of existing vacant ICI Dulux Decorator Centre to form 2 individual Units (Class E), formation of new drive-thru lane, and amendments to car parking arrangements at 1A Hylton Grange, Sunderland SR5 3HR
- 1.3 Site Location: 1A Hylton Grange, Sunderland SR5 3HR
- 1.4 The sections below will describe the outline of the site and the wider area, detail the relevant policy context and assess why a sequential assessment of the site should not be undertaken.

2.0 **Background – The Site and Wider Area**

- 2.1 The application relates to the site of a former ICI Dulux Decorator Centre at 1A Hylton Grange, Sunderland, SR5 3HR. The site is approximately 4 miles to the east of Sunderland City Centre and located west of Washington town centre.
- 2.2 The site lies within Hylton Grange, just off Wessington Way, which is at the south western corner of the Sunrise Enterprise Park. The characteristics of the area include car garages, a hotel with an associated restaurant and manufacturing and commercial units. Both Sunderland and Washington Town centres located nearby have a variety of shops, coffee shops and food outlets.
- 2.3 The site is well connected due to its location just off Wessington Way (A1231). To the West the A1231 connects the site towards Washington and the A194(m). Along this road there are numerous outlets similar to the proposal, including a McDonalds Drive-thru and Costa Coffee Drive-thru. Further east along Wessington Way, towards Sunderland, there is also a McDonalds Drive-Thru. The A19 is just west of the site which provides links further north towards Newcastle and southbound towards Middlesborough and North Yorkshire. Therefore, the location is a hotspot for commuter traffic.
- 2.4 It is proposed that the site is split into 2no. individual units of Class E use. The drive-thru is proposed to be a Starbucks, while the operator of the other unit has not yet been confirmed. The total floorspace of the 2 units would equate to 364sq.m, with the Starbucks Drive-thru being the largest at 256sq.m. The proposed development responds to the specific business model requirement of Starbucks (and other food and drink retailers) within Use Class E, incorporating an associated drive-thru lane and service level car parking. The drive-thru elements of the proposal are integral to the viability of the intended operators' business models.

3.0 **Impact and Sequential Assessment**

3.1 This section provides an assessment of the impact of the proposed change of use of the site on the surrounding local and district centres and identifies why this site is considered a suitable location for this development. In doing this both National Planning Policy and the Sunderland Core Strategy and Development Plan were considered, with relevant policies referenced below:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):

3.2 Paragraph 86 states that ‘...applications for main town centre uses should be located in town centres, then in edge-of-centre locations, and only if suitable sites are not available should out-of-centre sites be considered.’

3.3 In considering edge-of-centre and out-of-centre proposals, paragraph 87 states that ‘...preference should be given to accessible sites that are well-connected to the town centre. Applicants and local planning authorities should demonstrate flexibility on issues such as format and scale, so that opportunities to utilise suitable town centre or edge of centre sites are fully explored.’

3.4 In accordance with paragraph 90 of the NPPF, when applications for retail development outside of a town centre come forward, which are not in accordance with an up to date local plan, a retail impact assessment should be requested if over a proportionate locally set threshold. The NPPF references 2500sq.m, albeit that Sunderland have a tiered threshold system depending on the size of the retail centre. This assessment should include:

- 1 The impact of the proposal on existing, committed and planned public and private investment in a centre or centres in the catchment area of the proposal; and
- 2 The impact of the proposal on town centre vitality and the wider retail catchment.

The Development Plan

3.5 The Sunderland Core Strategy and Development Plan covers the period from 2015-2033 and was adopted in 2020.

3.6 The key planning policies for this RIA include:

- Policy VC1 – Main town centre uses and retail hierarchy; and
- Policy VC2- Retail Impact Assessments

3.7 Policy VC1 is the key policy in determining what a ‘main town centre use’ is and the retail hierarchy of Sunderland. Subpoint 6 states that the development of main town centre uses will be focused within existing designated centres within this retail hierarchy and that development outside of these centres will be required to submit a sequential assessment approach.

3.8 Subpoint 7 of VC1 also notes that out-of-centre retail parks, although not considered within the retail hierarchy, will be considered to be sequentially preferable to other out-of-centre locations.

- 3.9 Policy VC2 states that, when assessing applications for edge or out-of-centre retail development, the Council requires an impact assessment when the development meets a certain threshold of floorspace. The assessment must assess the potential impact of new developments for main town centre uses on existing designated centres.
- 3.10 It is within this context that it is important to consider the business model of the developer of the out-of-town use and whether this particular use would be viable within a town centre. This is necessary to consider whether the development would have an impact on town centre vitality and viability. In this case, when assessing the development, it is important to take the units and the drive-thru into account as a whole proposal and not individual aspects. Therefore, the units with the drive-thru lane are considered to be most appropriate in areas of passing trade via cars close to main routes of commuter traffic and, indeed, support a broader goal of removing cars from town centres.
- 3.11 The section below analyses why the proposed site for the drive-thru and associated units are the most viable options and identifies that there will not be an impact on the town centre due to the site being aimed towards capturing this passing trade from commuters using Wessington Way and the A19.

The Areas of Consideration:

- Sunderland City Centre
- Washington
- Castletown (Local Centre)

- 3.12 These are the primary areas of concern when considering the impacts of the proposal on surrounding retail areas as it is the nearest urban centre to the proposed site.

Justification for the location

- 3.13 Castletown is a designated Local Centre in the retail hierarchy of Sunderland. The local centres are not designated to provide the sort of use such as the drive thru and therefore it would be considered appropriate to have Castletown centre as an alternative location for the development. This is also due to the nature of the development with the drive-thru element meaning that being located with close access from main roads that contain lots of commuter traffic is key to the business model of the development.
- 3.14 Sunderland City Centre and Washington Town Centre are two sites where the retail of coffee shops and food units are also most likely to be located. In Washington there are numerous examples of this type of retail, such as a McDonalds and Tim Hortons located in the centre. This is coupled with the McDonalds drive-thru and Costa drive-thru located on the A1231 on the periphery of Washington. Within Sunderland City centre there are also numerous of coffee shops and food outlets as well as drive-thru retail units on the A1231 into the City centre. These two centres are the main urban areas for those living within the wider area of Sunderland and beyond for shopping and entertainment.
- 3.15 The proposed site being located along the A1231 is therefore considered the most appropriate location for the drive-thru and associated units for the following reasons:

- The proposed location is just off the A1231 with an existing access into and out of the site, therefore making it easily accessible for passing trade using the bypass. As such, the proposal is ideally configured for this location, and would not be easily transferable to a town centre location;
- The operational requirements of the proposed facilities seek to capture both passing trade from the A1231 and a small number of customers either working at the enterprise park around the site or passing foot trade from residential developments just north of the enterprise park; and
- The existence of other facilities of a similar nature including McDonalds drive-thru's and a Costa drive-thru restaurant also located nearby on the A1231.

3.16

The purpose of the proposed site in this location is not to divert trade from these urban centres at any scale within the retail hierarchy, but to capture the passing trade that uses the A1231 and A19 to reach communities in and around the county and those who use the commercial units nearby. Therefore, the proposed development will not take trade away from Sunderland city centre, Washington centre or Castletown, as the primary use of the site is not to provide those seeking to use the retail and leisure facilities of these centres. As a result, it is considered that exploring sites within these centres should not be necessary due to the location not being appropriate for this type of development and, indeed, this development is not designed to take trade away from these retail centres. Furthermore, as the drive-thru element is key to the success of the Starbucks business model, the location just off the A1231 will provide a great opportunity for passing trade to use this facility and other retail units.

4.0 **Summary**

- 4.1 This Retail Impact Assessment has considered the impact that the proposed development for the change of use including partial demolition of existing vacant ICI Dulux Decorator Centre to form 2 individual Units (Class E), and formation of a new drive-thru lane on the Local and District Centres of Sunderland will have on nearby urban centres. In this case, the nearest urban centres considered were Castletown, Washington, and Sunderland City Centre.
- 4.2 In line with the NPPF and Policies VC1 and VS2 of the Sunderland Core Strategy and Development Plan, the impact of the proposed out of town retail site on the vitality and viability of these urban centres has been assessed. It is considered that the proposed development will not impact the vitality and viability of these centres as the primary purpose of the development is to service commuter traffic from the A1231 and A19 travelling from Sunderland and Washington to surrounding communities. It is also thought that the drive-thru proposal would be inappropriate within an urban centre location like Sunderland as it would not attract the same level of passing trade and this would impact the viability of the proposal and of Starbucks business model.
- 4.3 It is for these reasons that there is not a need to consider further development sites within Sunderland City Centre or Washington and Castletown and we therefore conclude that this site represents the best possible location for the proposal. This is borne out by the existence of similar uses nearby to the site, such as a McDonald's drive-thru and Costa Coffee drive-thru.