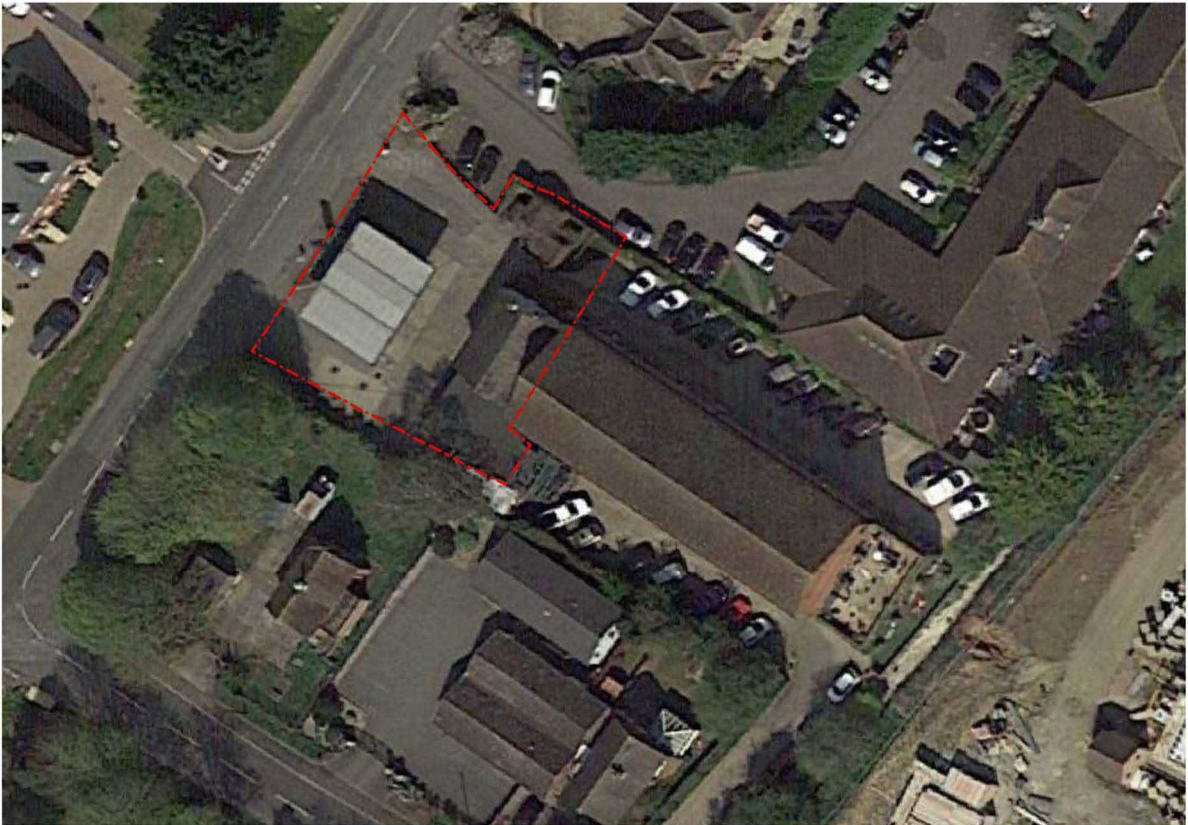




1.0 THE APPLICATION SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

The site of this proposed development lies to the south-west of Puckeridge, within a pocket of mixed-use land uses close to the roundabout junction of the A10 and A120. The built development group of which the site is a part is on the eastern side of the former A10, where it travels north-eastwards from its junction with the A120.



The tight cluster of development along the north-east side of the road comprises a pumping station, houses, a doctor's surgery, a petrol filling station, an antiques business and a block of flats. This application involves the building behind the petrol station that currently comprises the antiques business within a part single, two storey rendered front section with the more modern three storey block of flats behind. The modern red brick and tiled residential block was formerly part of the original Hotel complex, which now contains flats on each of its three floors.

The former Vintage Court Hotel lies to the north of the block, behind a row of detached houses. The group is bounded by open fields on its south-east and north-east sides. There is a smaller group of houses on the opposite side of the road. Collectively this pocket of mixed-use development lies within the north-eastern quadrant of the A10/A120 roundabout, to the south-west of Puckeridge High Street. A footpath link runs from the application site to the centre of the village.

2.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The application proposes the demolition of the existing filling station and the two-storey retail unit behind the filling station and in front of the block of flats and its replacement with a single-storey retail unit with separate plant building to the North of the site. The plans and elevations of the extension are shown on the drawings that accompany the application.

The proposals include 11 No. car parking spaces to the front of the site including 2no. disabled parking spaces. A pedestrian walkway to the front of the store is utilised with tactile paving at the crossovers from the pedestrian highway/footpath to aid accessibility and the pedestrian approach to the store.

The building is designed as two rectangular volumes, the 'store' and the 'back of house'. The smaller 'back of house' volume is stepped back from the front of the store and reduced in height. Both volumes are designed with a flat roof and brick parapet. To the front of the 'store' volume there is a large amount of glazing which opens the store to the front entrance.

There would be no change to the existing access arrangements. The right of way through the site to the rear of Vintage Court is retained.

The building is designed with red bricks to match the vernacular of the area. The bonding patterns are used to create some interest across the facades with a mixture of alternating header and stretcher courses and repeating header soldier courses to the parapets. This is interrupted by a long timber boarded panel used to display the store name and branding. To the front of the store there are large windows and glazed sliding doors along with an ATM machine. The large expanses of glazing are flanked on either side by two vertical columns of green glazed brickwork in alternating shades in continuous header soldier courses. This gives a flash of colour to the buildings.

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

The site was the subject of a pre-application submitted in September 2020 with the response received in December 2020.

The full planning application was then first submitted in November 2021 and refused in March 2023. The application was then resubmitted in April 2023 and withdrawn in July 2023.

The refusal and withdrawal were primarily due to a failure to submit additional requested information within the allocated time frames.

3.1 PRE-APPLICATION FEEDBACK AND RESPONSES

The following points were identified by the planning consultant and have been addressed in the planning application.

- *The principle of demolishing the existing filling station and retail building and replacing them with a new retail building that meets Policy VILL1 would be acceptable.*

This point was noted, and the principle has been retained for the full planning application.

- *It is disappointing that the two-storey building at the rear of the site is proposed to be demolished and replaced with a single storey flat-roofed building. Preference would be to keep the two-storey building that forms part of the character of the area with its pitched roof and traditional appearance and consider complementary extensions to this building rather than complete demolition*

The existing retail building is in a state of disrepair and would not suit the requirements of the proposed retail unit. Given the nature and positioning of the site the existing unit is limited in terms of the type of retail it could support. All options were considered in the design and retention of the existing unit is not feasible. It is considered the new

building will provide a supplement to the character of the area and all efforts have been made to ensure the design introduces some architectural interest whilst providing a building that can support its intended use.

- *The proposed building is not considered to relate well to the site or the adjoining properties with the building sited too close to the southern boundary, where there are mature trees adjoining. It is likely that a building sited as proposed would significantly impact on the roots of these trees*

The proposed retail building has been resized to bring the footprint away from the southern boundary. The new footprint extends no further than the current flat roof building on the site. The footprint has also been moved away from the Western boundary, the 'front' of the site with the footprint extending no further than the existing filling station. To the North, the footprint aligns with the extent of the current retail unit to ensure that the existing right of way is unobscured.

- *The refuse area at the rear of the building is in an awkward location for use and collection and does not appear to be large enough for the size of the building*

The proposals have been altered to ensure that refuse is not stored externally on site. Refuse will be collected daily as per the refuse and recycling strategy which is attached in support of the planning application.

- *The elevations submitted demonstrate that the proposed building does not relate well to the adjoining development and the flat roof design is out of character and does not provide a strong street frontage*

The proposed building has been modified to ensure that it is set back significantly from the street. The building has been split into two volumes, the store, and the back of house area. The back of house area is set back from the front of the store and reduced in height to ensure that the building does not appear overbearing for the site from the street. The front elevation is also designed with interesting brick types and varying brick patterns to provide an interesting elevation from the street. Incorporating a pitched roof would also create a far larger building volume, the incorporation of a flat roof hidden behind a parapet allows us to keep the building height to a minimum reduces its visual impact from the street.

- *Policy NE2 requires all proposals to have a net gain in biodiversity*

This has been addressed by adding a significant amount of new landscaping around the Northern boundary and around the new plant building. This is also achieved by the addition of planting to the Western site boundary adjacent to the parking areas. Please refer to the *1010 VC - BR01 Ecological Appraisal* and *1010 VC - BR02 Small Sites Metric Calculation Tool*.

- *If you are going to pursue the proposal, then it is recommended that you contact the Highway Authority for pre-application advice in regard to its requirements for the change of use and site access.*

Advice from Highways is attached in support of the planning application.

3.2 FIRST APPLICATION NO: 3/21/2675/FUL

The application was refused as per the below refusal reason:

- *'Insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate a net biodiversity gain on site, improvements to biodiversity, or to demonstrate how the development would comply with climate change and water saving policies. As such the proposal falls contrary to policies NE2, NE3, CC1, CC2, and WAT4 of the East Herts District Plan 2018 and the aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework'.*

The application is now accompanied by the requested documents in support of the stated policies.

The previous application has established some principles in terms of satisfying the relevant policies. These are summarised below (extracted from report):

'..the principle of the proposal accords with RTC5.'

'Subject to the impact upon neighbouring amenity, parking and servicing arrangements, the proposal accords with SP16.'

'With the site being previously developed, in line with Policies VILL1 and RTC5 of the East Herts District Plan, and SP16 of the Standon Neighbourhood Plan, the principle of providing a replacement retail unit on this site is accepted.'

'It is considered that the proposed building would be well positioned on the site and would be of a scale and design in keeping with the village and typical for a small supermarket. It is considered that the proposal would have an acceptable impact upon the appearance of the street scene.'

'With the Environmental Health (noise/nuisance) team raising no objection to the scheme it is considered that subject to conditions the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on neighbouring amenity with regards to noise, pollution, lighting, opening hours, deliveries and general disturbance from the use of the site.'

'With HCC Highways advising that they have no objection to the scheme subject to conditions, it is not considered that the proposal would have an unacceptable impact upon highway safety or the highway network.'

'..As such the proposal is considered acceptable with regards to flood risk.'

3.3 SECOND APPLICATION NO. 3/23/0713/FUL

The second application was withdrawn primarily due to the request for bat surveys which accompany this application.

4.0 ANALYSIS

It was acknowledged at the pre-application stage that the replacement retail element of the proposal would be acceptable. The inclusion of commercial space within the scheme is consistent with the Framework's advice upon supporting a prosperous rural economy and paragraph 28 which requires local planning authorities to support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business enterprise in rural areas.

In terms of its siting, scale and design the store reflects the existing character and appearance of the existing flat block and to not be over assertive or incongruous. In that respect it reinforces the local distinctiveness of the existing building of which it would be a part, meeting a key design principle of the Framework. The development would not intrude into the open countryside around the existing cluster of buildings, and not damage either the openness or the semi-rural character of this area of the village.

Car parking and servicing arrangements would meet the needs of the existing and proposed development, without causing any physical or visual harm. This quantity of spaces would be more than enough to serve the proposed demands of staff and visitors to the retail units.

It was confirmed at the pre-application stage that a development of this nature would not unduly impact upon the amenities of neighbouring residential properties.

5.0 SUMMARY

The application proposes a commercial development that would deliver business units on a brownfield site, amongst a collection of commercial and residential properties, in a sustainable location on the edge of Puckeridge.

It would fit comfortably into the existing pattern of development in this area, without harming any specially designated land or buildings. The site lies outside the Green Belt (and thus in Framework terms is subject to less policy-based restrictions upon new development) and is part of a long-established pocket of built development, which historically has been permitted to grow and expand over the past 30 years or so.

The scheme to replace the existing building in terms of its proposed uses and the siting, scale and design is entirely consistent with the advice and core principles of the Framework and, we believe, should be looked upon favourably accordingly. In short, it represents another chapter in the growth and consolidation of this mixed land use area of Puckeridge.

The scheme will provide several employment opportunities, including 19 positions involved in running and maintaining the store.

This statement has been prepared to support this formal planning application. It is however acknowledged that during its assessment and consideration there may be issues relating to the development which will require clarification, more information or even amendment. That being so, we welcome the opportunity to discuss and respond to any issues of detail that might arise before a final decision is taken upon the application.



Douglas Evans
For and on behalf of DPE Architecture Ltd.