



An effective pre-application stage which included discussions with council officers and a proactive consultation exercise secured a delegated approval for a new Aldi store in Sevenoaks, Kent, on an out-of-centre Green Belt site. Key policy hurdles were addressed early in the process, providing officers with the comfort to proceed with a delegated decision, despite local objections.

Sevenoaks has represented a key target town for Aldi for many years, with Planning Potential first initiating discussions with Sevenoaks District Council to discuss potential opportunities in the area. This initial process of exploring suitable opportunities also established early on that there were no suitable in-centre or edge-of-centre sites within the town, allowing considerations to focus on out-of-centre sites.

Following identification of an out-of-centre car dealership site, we led pre-application discussions with the council to explore potential policy hurdles, including: Green Belt location; loss of residential; design; retail impact; sequential; highways; design, and; sustainability.

Through presenting a comparison between the scale of existing development on site and the proposals, officer support for the principle of introducing a retail use on a Green Belt site was secured, with it previously having been established that no sequential sites existed within the town.

An effective consultation exercise was also undertaken prior to submission promoting the scheme benefits. This included a leaflet drop, meeting with the immediate neighbours of the site, discussions with local ward councillors, and presenting to the Town Council. Wide support for the proposal was secured at this stage.

An application was submitted in June 2017 for a store offering 1,583 sqm of gross floorspace (1,140 sqm net sales), supported by a 107-space car park. To reflect the sensitive location and regeneration potential, the scheme displayed a green roof and a commitment to achieving BREEAM 'Excellent' rating. These elements were particularly effective in securing the support of key local stakeholders.

Planning Potential led discussions with officers and coordinated responses to consultation comments. Efforts during the pre-application stage paid dividends following receipt of a particularly positive Policy Officer response which strongly supported Green Belt, retail impact and sequential case. With an equally positive endorsement from the local Highway Authority, Planning Officers had the comfort to proceed with a delegated decision, despite several neighbour objections and a retail competitor. The delegated decision was issued in October 2017.

Summary of Achievements

- Initiating a Target Town meeting with the Council to identify opportunities and inform sequential case
- Coordination of pre-application discussions with the local planning authority to identify key matters
- Production of a detailed planning statement and retail impact assessment to address policy tests
- Coordination of planning application preparation and submission
- Coordination of a community consultation exercise to secure support for the scheme
- Presenting to Town Council and Ward Councillors
- Project management of the consultant team
- Securing a delegated decision

Planning Potential Ltd

London

Magdalen House
148 Tooley Street
London SE1 2TU
T: 020 7357 8000