



Planning Potential successfully secured planning permission under delegated powers for external alterations and a change of use to Class E, allowing COOK to open a new store in Chelmsford.

Planning Potential were instructed by COOK to advise and submit a planning application for external alterations and change of use at a vacant car showroom to allow extension, conversion and occupation of the unit for Class E retail.

Whilst the site was not allocated for a specific use, it was located outside a town centre in a predominately residential area. Planning Potential prepared a detailed supporting Planning Statement which assessed the development against relevant policies to demonstrate the acceptability of the proposals for the location, and the many resulting benefits. These included continued commercial use of an accessible brownfield site, bringing it back into beneficial use and delivering regenerative benefits, providing additional local retail choice, and employment creation.

The statement also addressed relevant retail policy tests, namely sequential and impact, citing COOK's niche retail offer with limited project range, solely providing pre-prepared handmade frozen meals. We set out that these characteristics have an important bearing on site selection and were able to demonstrate that due to the nature of the use and goods sold, the store would not directly compete with existing shops and services which provide a more diverse project range.

Officers initially raised concerns following a highways objection to proposed servicing arrangements. We instructed transport consultants to engage directly with the highways authority, persuading officers to agree an extension of time and consider amendments to the scheme, which would not normally be accepted. Thanks to this early intervention, matters were swiftly resolved, allowing the highways objection to be removed and permission granted.

Planning permission was granted under delegated powers with no pre-commencement conditions, allowing COOK to progress swiftly on site.

Summary of achievements

- Coordination of planning application preparation and submission
- Preparation of a robust planning case
- Review of consultation responses and early intervention when issues arose, ensuring concerns raised were dealt with swiftly
- Negotiation with LPA Officers to justify amends to the scheme in response to concerns raised
- Securing delegated consent with no pre-commencement conditions

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