



We are retained planning consultants for Metro Bank and are assisting them with their ambitious store expansion programme. Metro Bank are the UK's first new high street bank in over 100 years, providing both retail and commercial banking services. Whilst seeking to extend their reach across the UK, Metro Bank are keen to deliver significant investment in new stores and become an important part of the local communities in which they operate.

As part of Metro Bank's ongoing expansion, we were instructed to obtain planning permission for three new stores, in Basingstoke, Colchester and Ilford. It was essential for us to secure planning permission and signage consent swiftly and without any onerous planning conditions – in order to meet contractual dates and comply with Metro Bank's strict opening programme.

All three sites were in town centre locations and presented various challenges:

- The Colchester site was a locally listed building, situated in a conservation area
- The proposals for a new Metro Bank in Basingstoke also involved the relocation of an existing Greggs shop, to a larger and more suitable unit next to the Metro Bank store
- There were multiple title interests to consider in relation to the Ilford store, together with wider public realm works, affecting the setting of the proposed new Metro Bank

We adopted a coordinated approach, working closely with Metro Bank's property team to ensure careful management of the entire planning process, from pre-application discussions, all the way through to determination.

Considerable effort was made prior to the submission of all three applications, to meet with councillors, planning officers, inward investment teams and other key stakeholders to introduce the Metro Bank concept and explain the key benefits of the new store proposals. As a consequence of these extensive discussions, stakeholders welcomed the introduction of Metro Bank to the area and confirmed the store locations as being acceptable in principle. This also ensured that any queries could be answered in advance of the planning submission, helping to avoid potential delays. Our applications were also front loaded with key details, in order to eliminate pre-start conditions.



We regularly monitored the progress of applications and liaised directly with council officers – arranging additional site visits where necessary – throughout the process to ensure that any issues that arose were swiftly addressed. Consent was granted for all three stores within the statutory time period, allowing for contractual targets and construction deadlines to be achieved. Consent was secured for the Colchester store in just six weeks.

Summary of achievements

- Management of the pre-application advice process and liaison with council officers and key stakeholders
- Preparation of planning statements and compilation of a comprehensive planning submission to support each application
- Close liaison and negotiation with the local councils to progress each application, proactively responding to issues throughout
- Explanation and justification of Metro Bank's operations, and securing the approvals required to meet operational needs
- Careful coordination and management of the process, in a tight timeframe, in order to gain planning permission for three Metro Bank stores in one month.

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