



A coordinated community consultation exercise generated almost unanimous support from local residents for a new Aldi store in Welwyn Garden City. Planning Potential also secured the support of council officers and planning committee members, obtaining permission for this retail development on allocated employment land.

Consent for a standalone Aldi food store in Welwyn Garden City was granted in September 2016. We secured permission for the regeneration of a vacant brownfield site and the delivery of a new 1,693-square-metre food store, together with parking for 106 vehicles.

The site had a history of employment use and, despite being vacant for almost 20 years, it was subject to an employment allocation. We focused on promoting the regeneration potential of the development, explaining that the proposed new retail use would offer more employment opportunities than a more traditional business use.

Although the site of the proposed Aldi development was out of centre, we prepared a retail impact assessment to demonstrate how an accessible store would provide additional choice and attract shoppers, whilst potentially boosting food shopping activity in central Welwyn. Officers and members recognised the benefits the new store would bring to the town centre.

The location of the site, adjacent to a capped gas holder site, raised a number of challenges. We worked closely with the local planning authority and National Grid, to begin the hazardous substance consent revocation process, so that the Health and Safety Executive could remove their holding objection to the development.

Our role was to also harness support from the local community. Working alongside our sister company, Communications Potential, we conducted an extensive community consultation exercise, engaging with local residents and businesses. This resulted in an almost unanimous level of support for the application – with 92 per cent of consultees expressing support for the scheme.

Summary of achievements

- Coordination of pre-application discussions with the local planning authority
- Production of a detailed planning statement and retail impact assessment
- Coordination of planning application preparation and submission
- Liaison with National Grid and the LPA to enable the hazardous substance consent revocation process
- Coordination of a community consultation exercise to secure support for the scheme
- Project management of the consultant team
- Representation of Aldi at committee – securing a positive resolution without S106 obligations

Planning Potential Ltd

London

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