

Planning Application Response of Planning Policy

Application No:	APP/21/00399
Address:	Land at Waterloo Park, Elettra Avenue, Waterlooville
Development:	Full application for erection of discount foodstore, drive through coffee shop and drive-through restaurant with associated car parking, service yard, landscaping, means of access and associated infrastructure
Case Officer:	Lewis Oliver
Comments by:	Jade Ellis
Date of Comments:	26 th January 2022 (reconsultation)

Policy comments dated 9th August 2021 highlighted a need for the applicant to submit a revised sequential assessment which draws in the vacant Waitrose store, including an assessment of its availability and suitability.

The applicant's agent has subsequently submitted a Sequential Test Addendum which assesses the suitability of the vacant Waitrose store. In such circumstances, the Council may seek an independent review of the evidence submitted to be undertaken (with the costs to be borne by the applicant). However, at this stage there are a number of areas where further information is required from the applicant in order to justify its position. These are discussed in turn.

Response: It should be noted that for a site to be considered suitable, the site does not need to be suitable for the requirements of a specific operator.

The Addendum outlines why the applicant considers the vacant Waitrose store is not suitable for the intended occupier including that it has a very specific model for the range of goods they stock, and that the vacant Waitrose store would be far larger than would be required. This is not considered to be a strong reason as to why the former Waitrose unit is not suitable for the development proposed. In addition, it is noted the configuration of the store would not fit the occupier's model and that the store would not have its own dedicated free parking.

Response: We are of the view that the fact the former Waitrose store unit being larger than that of the application proposal is not a strong reason as to why the site is not suitable for the development proposed. It should also be noted that the landlord is open to discussing how they can make the unit, or part of it be reconfigured or adapted to meet the occupier's specification and requirements (this is discussed below). Finally, it is not considered that car parking is a compelling reason as to why the former Waitrose unit is not suitable for the development proposed.

The Addendum also considers the subdivision of the existing unit. It highlights there is a single yard and access which would be required by the supermarket (and therefore not available to other units formed following subdivision). It is also highlighted that there would be a lack of frontage as a result of any subdivision (with any smaller units fronting the pedestrian only walkway between the vacant Waitrose store and the Bonmarche store). It is also queried why such an operator as Waitrose were unable to successfully trade from the store.

Response: Whilst it is noted that it would not be ideal to have a shared servicing area from an operator's point of view, the applicant has not shown any flexibility on this point. There is also an absence of any evidence that the subdivision of units would result in such a frontage arrangement. Furthermore, the applicant has not considered whether the former Waitrose

site could be redeveloped and whether that might render the former Waitrose unit / site suitable and available for the application proposals. In terms of why Waitrose were unable to trade from the site, it could be for many reasons such as the unit struggling during the pandemic, the general consolidation of its portfolio due to restricting in the retail industry.

Finally, the Addendum considers disaggregation and sets out the proposed scheme is a 'composite' development that should not be subject to arbitrary disaggregation.

Response: It is noted the detailed scheme layout which reflects the unit specifications required by the operators, however, it should also be possible to deliver the different components (foodstore and drive throughs) in more than one phase. Indeed, the existing Lidl and McDonalds on the adjacent land have already been delivered separately and operate successfully. Whilst it is noted there is a preference to proposed scheme on one site, the applicant has not demonstrated any flexibility on this point.

Summary

At this stage, it is not possible to conclude that the application proposals pass the sequential test. The applicant needs to provide more compelling evidence to justify its position in this particular case. In the absence of any additional information in relation to the former Waitrose unit, the failure of the sequential test may justify refusal of planning permission.