

Future Wolverton response to the Planning Application 16/00360/FUL –

Partial demolition of the Stratford Road wall, removal of two trees, and erection of a foodstore of 2,478 sqm GIA with associated access including new pedestrian ramp and steps, servicing, parking and landscape.

Future Wolverton is a Community Benefit Society which seeks to achieve the sustainable, creative improvement of Wolverton. Established in 2013, we have 118 members, made up of local residents and businesses. Many of these members joined the organisation after we successfully led the development of the Wolverton Town Centre Neighbourhood Development Plan on behalf of the Town Council. The Neighbourhood Plan achieved a 90% yes vote at the Referendum in July 2015, and became part of the Development Plan for Milton Keynes in September 2015.

Policy W3 of the Wolverton Town Centre Neighbourhood Plan sets out the principles which should guide any redevelopment of the Railway Works site, if a redevelopment plan should come forward. One of these principles is that there should be a master planning approach to the regeneration of the site.

Future Wolverton are concerned that St Modwen have chosen to bring forward a full planning application for the Foodstore prior to securing outline planning permission from MK Council for their overall vision. Whilst Policy W3 does allow for proposals to be brought forward prior to a master-plan being agreed, this was not the community's preferred approach to redevelopment. This is because of the inherent risk that decisions made for one small part of the site will determine what happens on the rest of the site, negating the master-planning approach.

We will now assess the proposals for the foodstore against the design and planning principles of policy W3.

A – Providing new pedestrian and vehicular routes within those parts of the site that are publicly accessible, reinforcing the character of the site which has a strong east/west orientation.

We appreciate the efforts that have been made to provide a pedestrian crossing to the new store across Stratford Road, and the re-location of this entrance way to enable direct access. However, we remain concerned about the lack of facilities for pedestrians to cross the road into the store, which will undoubtedly be very busy. This is of particular concern because visitors to the Old Bath House & Community Centre will need to cross the path of traffic coming in and out of the store to access parking for the centre, including disabled parking bays. We believe that a safe crossing point needs to be provided in this location.

In terms of cycle access, Wolverton lacks an internal redway (cycle route) network, but the pathway alongside the Stratford Rd wall is rarely used by pedestrians, tending to be used by cyclists who feel unsafe on Stratford Road. We would like consideration to be given to the creation of a redway route to replace the footpath alongside the wall on Stratford Road. (see page 50 of the Wolverton Town Centre Neighbourhood Plan). This would enable greater cycle access to the store for people living in the West End of Wolverton, and would create better access for cyclists to the whole site, important for the ongoing redevelopment plans.

Future Wolverton response to the Planning Application 16/00360/FUL –

Partial demolition of the Stratford Road wall, removal of two trees, and erection of a foodstore of 2,478 sqm GIA with associated access including new pedestrian ramp and steps, servicing, parking and landscape.

B – Ensuring that the new pedestrian and vehicular routes within those parts of the site that are publicly accessible make as direct links as possible with Stratford Road and the town centre.

The location of the store on the boundary of the designated Town Centre is to be welcomed, and we very much hope that some knock-on economic benefit will be felt by local small businesses on Stratford Road, Church Street and the wider town centre. Efforts will need to be made by Lidl to promote local, small businesses, and we would welcome further information about how they plan to promote linked trips.

Our main area of concern is the impact of the development of the store in this location on the highway network.

The junction of Stratford Road and Radcliffe Street is extremely tight and often congested. It forms part of the bus route “loop” which goes up Creed Street, along Church Street, down Radcliffe Street and along Stratford Road. We are concerned by the impact that car traffic to the store will have on the flow of bus traffic around this loop, and fear bus congestion will develop.

We are also concerned by the potential for accidents caused by increasing numbers of vehicles turning right onto Stratford Road to exit the store. We seek reassurance from MK Council Highways Officers that safety audits have been carried out and that the proximity of this exit to the mini roundabout at the end of Radcliffe Street is not problematic.

C – Ensuring priority is given to pedestrian and cycle movements and creating links as direct as possible with existing bus stops.

As already outlined, we believe that more priority needs to be given to pedestrian and cycle movements, through the introduction of a cycle route alongside Stratford Road and an additional crossing at the highways exit and entrance to the store.

There are currently two bus stops on Stratford Road – one going towards Stony Stratford and one going towards Central Milton Keynes.

The re-location of the pedestrian crossing supports the use of the bus stop towards Stony Stratford, but without a crossing point to the pavement outside the Old Bath House the access to the bus stop towards Central Milton Keynes is hugely compromised.

D – Providing access for heavy vehicles serving the railway works by a new access taken to the north of Tesco from the end of McConnell Drive

We are concerned that the opportunity to take HGV’s deliveries to the store along McConnell Drive and behind the Tesco store has not been fully explored with Network Rail. This is an important example of how it would have been much better to complete the master-plan for the site in advance of site specific plans.

Partial demolition of the Stratford Road wall, removal of two trees, and erection of a foodstore of 2,478 sqm GIA with associated access including new pedestrian ramp and steps, servicing, parking and landscape.

E- Any proposed openings through the wall along Stratford Road should be kept to a minimum in size and number and carefully detailed to retain as much of the wall's integrity and role as a symbol of Wolverton's origins as a railway town as possible.

We welcome overall the changes made in the revised application to the treatment of the wall, but have a number of specific questions which are not addressed in the application:

To what extent are the bricks from the existing wall re-used in the new wall?

Are any "new" bricks required? And if so how will they be matched to the existing?

We are concerned that the railing detail must be appropriate for Wolverton, and could find no reference to the type and style of railings in the revised application.

F- Conserving and enhancing the historic buildings on the site, informed by further investigative work which may take place as part of a development framework for the site.

Whilst the site is currently vacant, we would like to see efforts made to explain the history of what used to be there. We believe this could be done through the positioning of information boards on the corner of Stratford Road and the vehicular access to the store. The same signage boards could highlight the history of the Old Bath House on the opposite corner of the road.

G- Contributing to the net gain of public and green spaces in the town centre by providing on-site high quality green infrastructure and public spaces including sustainable urban drainage landscaping schemes.

Whilst we appreciate that the proposals for the site do not easily lend themselves to the creation of public/green open space, the planting bed on the corner of the site opposite the OBHCC will be removed, and we would like to see this area of planting replaced, potentially with a planting scheme which assists in urban drainage. We would also like to see some seating included somewhere in the development to enable older people and those with children to pause briefly on their shopping trip.

H –Exploiting the asset that is the Grand Union Canal by maximising opportunities to access the canal from the town centre, encouraging recreation and tourism.

We appreciate that land ownership issues and the operational railway line make links with the Grand Union Canal difficult in this particular location. Without the overall master-plan being in place it is difficult to see this in context, and we are remain concerned that all opportunities are taken to open up access to the canal, encouraging leisure and tourism uses.

Partial demolition of the Stratford Road wall, removal of two trees, and erection of a foodstore of 2,478 sqm GIA with associated access including new pedestrian ramp and steps, servicing, parking and landscape.

I – Re-uses historic buildings and provides sites for new homes. Consideration should be given to a proportion of streets being designed so that speeds are slow (10mph) so as to meet the needs of children and pedestrians in particular, and where car parking is designed into the overall streetscape so as to not dominate it. A proportion of the new homes should subject to viability also meet the Lifetime Homes standard. Secured by Design and Safer Places best practice should be applied to the design of all the new housing.

Whilst the development proposed by this application is clearly retail, we would encourage a maximum speed limit of 10 mph on the access road to the store to address the pedestrian access issues outline above.

J. Contributes to the overall mix of employment uses in Wolverton, incorporating light industrial use and leisure use where viable and in respect of leisure uses subject to the sequential test set out in paragraph 24 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Whilst we appreciate that the store development will create new jobs, it is disappointing that the opportunity has not been taken to enhance the overall employment mix in Wolverton through this development.

We would have liked to see some consideration given to the development of small workshops units to support the development of small, local enterprise.

This could still be considered to the rear of the site, and would be a very specific way in which Lidl could contribute further to the development of the local economy.

K. Subject to viability, gives a particular emphasis to sustainability through the use of zero carbon solutions, designed for climate change and district heating.

We understand that our sister organisation, Wolverton Community Energy, have already submitted comments on the application and are keen to open discussions with the applicant and Lidl about the installation of solar PV and renewable heating opportunities. We would be very keen to see these discussions take place at the earliest opportunity, to ensure that the building is as sustainable as possible and contributes to the local community in the widest possible sense.

L. Actively encourages the incorporation of a local energy network, such as a link to the Waste Recovery Park at Old Wolverton where practicable and viable to do so.

As above, Wolverton Community Energy are exploring the possibility of the excess electricity being produced by the Amey Cespa Waste Recovery Park being used to

Future Wolverton response to the Planning Application 16/00360/FUL –

Partial demolition of the Stratford Road wall, removal of two trees, and erection of a foodstore of 2,478 sqm GIA with associated access including new pedestrian ramp and steps, servicing, parking and landscape.

create a local micro grid within Wolverton. We hope St Modwen will engage with them as part of this application process.

M. Subject to viability on and off-site infrastructure will be provided to support and mitigate the impact of development, in particular school places and health care provision for all new residents.

We are keen to see section 106 contributions which contribute to improvements to the public realm along Stratford Road, in particular to pavement re-surfacing, new street furniture and signage.

N. Water efficiency measures should be introduced into any new development, including the introduction of sustainable urban drainage systems which reduce flood risk and add ecological value and interest to the development. Opportunities should be taken to reduce any water flows currently discharging to the surface water network.

Whilst Policy W3 of the Neighbourhood Plan is of most relevance to the planning application, we would expect to see other policies in the Plan supported by this planning application, in particular:

Policy W6 – Supporting and promoting small, local trade

This policy requires that schemes involving over 1,000 square metres of development shall (subject to viability), provide a number of small shops units relative to the size and scale of the development. Once provided, the Neighbourhood Plan requires that a condition (or legal agreement if appropriate) should be put in place so that planning permission would be required for any proposal to combine smaller units into larger units.

As highlighted above, we would have liked to see this application support a diversity of employment uses, with small workshops (with some retail element) developed alongside the store to promote and support local trade.

Policy W7 - Shopfront Design, Advertising and Security

This policy requires that the design of a shopfront takes into account the wider relationship with the surrounding built environment. It states that proposals for shopfront design should (amongst other things):

- Be appropriate in proportion, materials and details to maintain and reflect the style and characteristics of the Conservation Area and neighbouring properties.
- Enhance the buildings character and compliment adjacent shop fronts where these are of good quality design.

Future Wolverton response to the Planning Application 16/00360/FUL –

Partial demolition of the Stratford Road wall, removal of two trees, and erection of a foodstore of 2,478 sqm GIA with associated access including new pedestrian ramp and steps, servicing, parking and landscape.

- Avoid large unbroken areas of glass in favour of vertically subdivided areas based on the character of the existing buildings and local Victorian/Edwardian architectural styles.

We welcome the changes to the design of the store, in particular the introduction of a pitched roof and brick detailing. However, we remain concerned at the extent of the glass frontage of the building, and the fact that the needs of the Conservation Area seem to be secondary to the needs of the store operator to retain the “normal” look of their stores/brand identity.