

INTRODUCTION

The application site is 609.4 sq. m in area and is located at the junction of Leopold Road and Melrose Road. The application site is brownfield having been previously developed as a petrol filling station, garage and later a car dealership. Although the site has been cleared and all the buildings previously erected within the site the garage forecourt remains clearly evident. The application site has frontages to both Leopold Road and Melrose Road that are predominantly residential streets. Existing complementary Local Centre type retail and service uses are evident along Leopold Road and Waldeck Road that are in close proximity to the application site.

The applicants propose the redevelopment of the application site as a small Local Centre at an appropriate scale and mix to serve a walk-in catchment population that is already resident within an 800m radius or 10-minute walk-time of the site.

There is no existing allocated Local or District Centre available to meet the day-to-day convenience retail and service requirements of local residents within a 10-minute walk time of the application site. It is therefore assumed that the majority of existing residents either walk excessive distances, cycle or drive by motor car to other centres or out-of-town food retail stores to meet their day-to-day retail or service needs.

The application proposals are designed to supplement and develop existing Local Centre functions already present about the area immediately surrounding the application site. The Local Centre type convenience or service functions that are already present along Leopold Road are as follows:

- One Stop convenience food store and newsagents;
- The Beehive Public House;
- Andrew David Hairdressers;
- Hadley Taylor Estate Agents; and
- Melrose Garage.

THE PROPOSAL

The applicant is seeking to complement and reinforce existing Local Centre functions already present along Leopold Road and Melrose Road to reduce motor car reliance locally.

The application site is beyond what is considered to be a reasonable walk-time of all existing allocated Local Centres in this part of Norwich. As such it is assumed

that a high proportion of residents living in this part of Norwich are currently motor car reliant.

The application proposals provide for the development of 5 no. small scale units to be occupied by tenants within the A1 (retail), A2 (financial and professional), A3 (restaurant and cafes), B1a (office), D1 (non residential institutions) and D2 (assembly and leisure) use classes. The units are designed to be a suitable size to accommodate convenience shops and services as follows:

- Unit 1 – 95.0 sq. m (1,022.2 sq. ft) gross floor space;
- Unit 2 – 36.95 sq. m (397.6 sq. ft) gross floor space;
- Unit 3 – 36.95 sq. m (397.6 sq. ft) gross floor space;
- Unit 4 – 36.95 sq. m (397.6 sq. ft) gross floor space; and
- Unit 5 – 59.0 sq. m (617.8 sq. ft) gross floor space.

It should be noted that all the units proposed to be erected would all be below 100 sq. m net floor space post occupation.

The applicant is mindful of any adverse impact that may result from the proposals upon existing complementary and desired Local Centre uses already present adjacent the application site along Leopold Road, Melrose Road and Waldeck Road. As such, the applicant does not propose the occupancy of any of the convenience units proposed by food retailers or newsagents. This approach will ensure that no adverse impact results from the scheme upon the existing One Stop convenience store.

The applicant is seeking planning permission to enable the occupation of the convenience units proposed by appropriately scaled end users within the A1, A2, A3, B1, C1 and C2 use classes. The applicant is prepared to accept a restrictive condition that only enables occupation of individual units proposed by the following types of retailers or services:

- Greengrocers;
- Butchers;
- Bakers;
- Hairdressers;
- Laundrette;
- Post Office;
- Pharmacy;
- Bank or Building Society;
- Dry Cleaners;
- Funeral Directors;
- Off-license;
- Video Store;
- Gymnasium;
- Estate Agents;
- Accountants;

- Bookmakers;
- Doctors or Dentists Surgery;
- Café;
- Travel Agency;
- Sandwich Bar; or
- Offices.

As referred to previously, the applicant also proposes the development of 5 no. flatted residential dwelling units with 1:1 dedicated off-street parking provision. The dwelling units are designed to be erected above the Local Centre uses at Ground Floor level and to cantilever over the pavement by up to 1m to create a strip-mall arrangement. This approach provides a weather cover for shoppers and pedestrians.

The introduction of residential dwelling units above the convenience strip will also benefit the wider residential area and the uses beneath by improving natural surveillance over the shop units and along the length of Leopold Road and Melrose Road.

It is considered that the dwelling units proposed will be particularly suited to more members of society who are either less reliant upon the motor car or less mobile such as the young and the elderly.

In designing the scheme Owen Bond Partnership, SLR Consulting and Broadfield Planning had specific regard to the following brief:

- Seek to develop as far as possible a critical mass of convenience uses to complement existing Local Centre type uses located about the junctions of Leopold Road with Waldeck Road and Melrose Road;
- Seek to deliver a range of small scale convenience uses to meet the day-to-day needs of a walk-in catchment population having regard to the type and location of existing uses present about the surrounding area;
- Create sustainable shopping patterns locally by delivering a sufficiently varied mix of convenience uses to ensure that the area becomes more attractive to meet the day-to-day needs of local residents to ensure a reduction in vehicle trips locally and a resulting improvement in air quality;
- Create an iconic building to act as a community focus to aid social inclusion about the local area;
- Create a scheme that is not visually dominated by car parking by concealing all car parking necessary to serve the residential units proposed within the scheme at the rear of the convenience units;
- Create a scheme that will directly affect motor car usage locally and that will re-shape residents travel patterns by providing no staff and customer car parking provision to the convenience units proposed;

- Build into the scheme a number of dwelling units that should be designed to improve natural surveillance across external public spaces about the site to ensure that the new Local Centre is well used by all sections of the local community;
- Look creatively at whether the residential units above the convenience spaces can be used to overhang the front of the retail units to form a strip mall approach to weather protect customers visiting and potential customers passing by the new small Local Centre; and
- Have specific regard to the potential for overlooking, over shadowing, massing and privacy impacts upon the occupants of existing dwelling units adjacent the application site.

It is the considered view of the project team that the brief has been closely adhered to in the final scheme design. It is further the considered view of the project team that the scheme accords fully with the aims and objectives of current Government guidance.

GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE

Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing

PPS6 sets out the Government's national aims and objectives in respect of all forms of residential development.

Paragraph 10 of PPS3 under the sub heading *PLANNING FOR HOUSING POLICY OBJECTIVES* states:

"...The specific outcomes that the planning system should deliver are:

- High quality housing that is well designed and built to a high standard.
- A mix of housing... ..to support a wide variety of households in all areas, both urban and rural.
- A sufficient quantity of housing taking into account need and demand and seeking to approve choice.
- Housing developments in suitable locations, which offer a good range of community facilities and with good access to jobs, key services and infrastructure.
- A flexible, responsive supply of land – managed in a way that makes efficient and effective use of land, including re-use of previously developed land, where appropriate." (BP underline)

Paragraph 36 under the sub heading *IDENTIFYING SUITABLE LOCATIONS FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT* states:

"In supporting its objective of creating mixed and sustainable communities, the Government's policy is to ensure that housing is developed in suitable locations which offer a range of community facilities and with good access to jobs, key

services and infrastructure." (BP underline)

Paragraph 48 under the sub heading *EFFICIENT USE OF LAND* states:
"Good design is fundamental to using land efficiently." (BP underline)

Paragraph 50 under the sub heading *EFFICIENT USE OF LAND* states:
"The density of existing development should not dictate that of new housing by stifling change or requiring replication of existing style or form. If done well, imaginative design and layout of new development can lead to a more efficient use of land without compromising the quality of the local environment." (BP underline)

Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres

PPS6 sets out the Government's national aims and objectives in respect of all forms of retail and service development.

Paragraph 1.1 of PPS6 under the sub-heading *THE GOVERNMENT'S OBJECTIVES* states:

"The Government is committed to developing and supporting successful, thriving, safer and inclusive communities..." (BP underline)

Paragraph 2.49 of PPS6 under the sub-heading *SITE SELECTION AND LAND ASSEMBLY* states:

"The Government is seeking to reduce the need to travel, to encourage the use of public transport, walking and cycling and reduce reliance on the private car, to facilitate multi-purpose journeys and to ensure that everyone has access to a range of facilities..." (BP underline)

Paragraph 2.55 of PPS6 under the sub-heading *PROVIDING FOR LOCAL SHOPPING AND OTHER SERVICES* states:

"A network of local centres in an authority's area is essential to provide easily accessible shopping to meet people's day-to-day needs... ..The mix of uses in local centres should be carefully managed." (BP underline)

Annex A of PPS6 entitled *TYPOLOGIES* states:

"Local centres include a range of small shops of a local nature, serving a small catchment. Typically, local centres might include, amongst other shops, a small supermarket, a newsagent, a sub-post office and a pharmacy. Other facilities could include a hot food takeaway and laundrette..." (BP underline)

The application proposals are designed to diversify the mix of convenience uses that already exist along and off Leopold Road specifically to reduce reliance upon the motor car amongst local residents.

THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

City of Norwich Replacement Local Plan

The City of Norwich Replacement Local Plan was adopted during November 2004. The following policies and extracts are considered relevant to the current proposal:

Paragraph 4.21 under the sub heading AIR QUALITY states:

“The air quality issues arising in Norwich are nearly all associated with excess traffic volumes in confined areas...” (BP underline)

Although the application site is not within an area that is allocated as an existing Local Centre it is within an area where there has always been a cluster of convenience retail and service uses.

The applicant considers that the area about the intersections of Leopold Road with Waldeck Road and Melrose Road is appropriate for the development of a new small Local Centre. The applicants further consider that the application site should be allocated as such in the foreseeable future. Paragraph 7.52 of the adopted Plan states in line with current Government guidance that:

“...it is important that an appropriate range of goods and services are maintained in order to provide for people’s day-to-day needs.” (BP underline)

Paragraph 7.53 of the adopted Plan under the sub heading *SMALL SCALE DEVELOPMENT TO SERVE LOCAL NEEDS* confirms “There are locations within the City... ..where there is no provision for local shopping needs of residents.” (BP underline)

The applicant would argue that although the existing One Stop convenience store at the intersection of Waldeck and Leopold Roads provides local shopping it is not sufficiently attractive in terms of the retail offer to significantly reduce car reliance locally.

The current proposal seeks to improve the convenience and service offer available and to create a critical mass of convenience use that is sufficiently attractive to prevent people living locally travelling by motor car to other retailing locations.

Paragraph 7.53 confirms this view and further states “...the thrust of the Council’s strategy is to ensure the vitality and viability of appropriately sized centres, distributed throughout the City, there is also an expectation that customers will be able to access smaller convenience ‘top-up’ stores for daily needs below the scale expected in defined centres. Provision of small individual

shop units will also assist in encouraging a basic level of walk-in provision, highly accessible to a resident population. For this reason it is appropriate to limit the scale of such provision to units under 100 sq. metres net..." (BP underline)

The Council will note that the size of individual convenience units with the proposed scheme is capped below 100 sq. m net retail floor space. This is to ensure that that a sufficiently varied mix of uses can be accommodated within the application proposals to create a sufficiently attractive critical mass.

In this respect Policy SHO16 states:

"Development proposals for additional local convenience shop units of below 100 square metres net retail floor spaces will be permitted outside defined centres where:

- (i) They are located in primarily residential areas, where there is an absence of existing provision to serve local needs;
- (ii) They have good accessibility on foot or by cycle to that residential community;
- (iii) Any access, parking, servicing and design issues can be satisfied without detriment to residential amenity." (BP underline)

It is the considered view that the current proposals accord with the aims and objectives of the Local Plan in respect of convenience and service provision at source to meet day-to-day local needs and sustainable patterns of movement.