

DM/24/3077 - Sussex House, Perrymount Road, Haywards Heath

10. 03. 25

Thank you for consulting the planning policy team on the planning application for:
'Demolition of the existing buildings and construction of a new food store (Use Class E(a)), with access, car and cycle parking, landscaping and associated works.'

The policy team would like to make the following comments which focus predominantly on the acceptability of the proposal and its ability to comply with the policy requirements for Policy DP2: Town Centre Development, specifically the Sequential Test and Retail Impact Assessment requirements.

Development Plan

Planning applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless other material considerations dictate otherwise. The Development Plan comprises the Mid Sussex District Plan 2031, the Haywards Heath Neighbourhood Plan (Made December 2016) and the Site Allocations DPD (Adopted June 2022) and a series of Supplementary Planning Documents including the Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document 2021.

The District Plan has been reviewed to ensure it remains effective and consistent with national policy. The review process commenced in 2021 and the draft Mid Sussex District Plan (2021-2039) was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate on the 8th July 2024. The first set of Examination hearings took place in October 2024. At this stage, policies within the draft District Plan 2021 – 2039 are a material consideration, however as the plan is not yet adopted it does not form part of the Development Plan and has limited weight.

District Plan (2018) policy DP2: Town Centre Development is considered key. Other key policies include: DP21: Transport and DP38: Biodiversity.

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraphs 7 and 8 of the Framework highlight the purpose of the planning system to contribute towards achieving sustainable development. Paragraph 11 goes on to state that decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development and approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.

Principle of development

The site, subject to this planning application is located approx. 45m north of the defined Haywards Heath town centre boundary; however, it is located within the town centre masterplan boundary as per the Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document 2021.

Although the site is located outside the town centre boundary, the site is very much surrounded by town centres uses including a large Waitrose store opposite and a large Sainsburys store. There is also currently a Budgens store which sits in the south west corner of the site fronting Perrymount Road which is to be replaced by the Aldi store.

Sequential Test

Policy DP2: Town Centre Development, requires a sequential test to be applied as this application is for a main town centre use that is not within a defined town centre boundary. The sequential test requires applications for main town centre uses to be located in town centres; or, if suitable sites are not available in edge of centre locations where the site is accessible and well connected to the town centre.

The applicant has set out in their supporting information that 7 sites and a number of vacant units in Haywards Heath have been assessed for their suitability. With regards to the vacant units, a total of 12 vacant units were identified within Haywards Heath town centre, the largest of which extends to 210 sq m. A unit of this size is not suitable for the proposed development and therefore vacant units are not considered further as part of the sequential test.

With regards to the 7 sites identified, none of them are considered suitable for the proposed development due to being too small, not being available or not suitable, therefore there are no sequentially preferable sites within or on the edge of Haywards Heath town centre that could accommodate the proposed development.

It is considered that the sequential test undertaken meets the requirements set out in Policy DP2: Town Centre Development.

Retail Impact Assessment

Policy DP2: Town Centre Development, requires that proposals for the construction of 500m² or more gross floorspace for the sale of convenience or comparison goods outside a town centre must be accompanied by a Retail Impact Assessment in order to demonstrate that they would not have a significant adverse impact on a town centre.

The retail development proposed comprises a retail area of 1,940 sq m (GIA) including a sales area of 1,154 sq m. This is above the 500 sq m set out in Policy DP2, therefore a Retail Impact Assessment is required.

The applicant has undertaken a Retail Impact Assessment as part of their supporting information which is considered to follow the methodology for retail impact set out in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) and meets the requirements set out in Policy DP2: Town Centre Development.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Policy 38: Biodiversity, requires that developments take measures to enhance the biodiversity on Site, ensuring that there is an overall net gain. Subsequent to this, new mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements have been introduced as part of the Environment Act 2021 and require a net gain of 10% using the 'biodiversity metric' tool. It is noted that the applicant has submitted evidence setting out how this policy requirement will be met. It will be for the case officer, in liaison with other consultee's, to determine if this sufficient information for planning application stage

Transport

Policy DP21: Transport requires development schemes to make appropriate provision of car parking, in accordance with local standards (West Sussex County Council Guidance on Parking at New Developments for Non-Residential Developments (2021)), which state 1 car parking space per 14sqm. The 97 car parking spaces proposed therefore falls below the policy requirement by 42 spaces, however the site is considered to be in a sustainable location and accessible and well connected by a range of transport modes.

Summary

The proposed development is supported in principle and is considered to meet the Sequential Test and Retail Impact Assessment requirements set out in Policy DP2: Town Centre Development.