



# Planning Statement

Proposed ALDI Foodstore,  
Bridge Street, Walton-on-Thames



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## Executive Summary

This planning application proposes the refurbishment of the existing Carpetright building in Walton-on-Thames to facilitate its occupation by a new ALDI foodstore. The proposed use for the ground floor is as retail floorspace, and the first floor is proposed as a warehouse and welfare area. This is consistent with the unit's previous layout. The existing roof-top car park and public car park on the ground floor will be available to customers. The building will continue to be serviced in a similar way to the existing.

The principle of retail use is well established at the site, having accommodated a retail store for many years. The application proposes external alterations, including elevational treatments and shopfronts. In addition, works include the internal reconfiguration of the building and reconfiguration of the roof-top car park. Accordingly, the proposal is considered acceptable in design, amenity, highways, and retail policy terms.

The proposal will provide beneficial economic development, significantly enhancing the local shopping choice within Walton-on-Thames and the surrounding area. The ALDI discount foodstore will create approximately 40 new local jobs. Furthermore, the proposals will address the limited discount foodstore provision in the area, and assist in retaining expenditure in the area and reducing the need to travel to towns outside of Walton-on-Thames.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Planning Statement is submitted by Planning Potential, on behalf of ALDI Stores Limited (ALDI), in support of a full planning application for internal and external alterations, and a reconfiguration of the existing Carpetright store on Bridge Street in Walton-on-Thames to facilitate a new ALDI foodstore. The application proposes external alterations, including elevational treatments and shopfronts. In addition, works include the internal reconfiguration of the building and reconfiguration of the roof-top car park.
- 1.2. The application proposal is described as follows:

*“External alterations to the existing Carpetright unit (Ground Floor and First Floor), internal reconfiguration of the building and reconfiguration of the roof-top car park to facilitate a new ALDI foodstore.”*
- 1.3. This Statement addresses all of the relevant planning policy considerations associated with the proposed development, but should be read in conjunction with other documents and drawings submitted in support of this application.
- 1.4. A separate application for a Certificate of Lawfulness for Existing Use or Development (CLUED) has been submitted to Elmbridge Borough Council to confirm the use class of the building as Class A1 without restrictions on the sale of goods.

### Background

- 1.5. ALDI has had a longstanding requirement to open a store in Walton-on-Thames, and indeed it is considered there is considerable qualitative need for a new discount foodstore to serve the town and surrounding areas. The site has been identified following a thorough review of potential opportunities and meets ALDI's key locational requirements.
- 1.6. ALDI have been actively searching for a site to facilitate new store in Walton-on-Thames since the previous ALDI store on Church Street was closed due to the expiry of the lease on the building. The former ALDI store building is currently a Marks and Spencer store.
- 1.7. The previous ALDI store was trading well for many years before its closure. The closest existing ALDI stores are located on Gogmore Lane, Chertsey (6.9 km south east), High Street, Feltham (8.2 km north), and Adams Walk, Kingston-on-Thames (11.2 km north east).

### Retail Context

- 1.8. The application site has had an established Class A1 retail use for many years. It is acknowledged that the application site is situated within a designated retail centre in retail policy terms, as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework NPPF (July 2018), and is the priority for retail investment. The site is also an established retail unit and (on the basis of the information submitted with the CLUED) no change of use is required.
- 1.9. The principle of retail use is well established at the site, having accommodated a Carpetright store for many years, prior to which, it was a Woolworths store. The

proposed development will provide an enhanced retail facility within the established location.

1.10. This statement is set out as follows:

- Section 2 - Summarises the site context and the development proposals;
- Section 3 - Provides an overview of ALDI Stores Ltd.
- Section 4 - Sets out the planning policy context against which the proposal should be assessed, including the NPPF and the Development Plan;
- Section 5 – Sets out our assessment of key planning issues relating to the proposed development; and
- Section 6 – Presents our summary and conclusions.

1.11. It should be noted that Section 3 of this Statement sets out in some detail the nature of ALDI, in terms of the proposed use and the format of the proposed store. This should be an important consideration in Elmbridge Borough Council's assessment of this planning application, and demonstrates the qualitative improvement to retail provision that will be brought about through this application proposal.

## 2. Site Context and Development Proposals

### The Site

- 2.1. The site comprises a two-storey building, which is currently a Carpertright store. The building was originally opened as a Woolworth's store, with a roof-top public car park and an access ramp on Hepworth Way. The existing building has a Gross Internal Area of 1,212 sqm at ground floor level and 1,323 sqm at first floor level.
- 2.2. The building is located on the corner of Hepworth Way and Bridge Street within the Town Centre boundary of Walton-on-Thames and is within the Primary Shopping Frontage as defined by the Elmbridge Local Plan Proposals Map and the Elmbridge Core Strategy (2011).
- 2.3. The existing building is on the crossroads of the A3050 and High Street and Bridge Street, opposite the 'The Heart Shopping Centre', the mixed-use redevelopment of Walton's town centre.
- 2.4. The building has a prominent façade along the main road and central junction, and is accessed by pedestrians through the main doors on the corner. The main shopfront is on Bridge Street, under a cantilevered canopy that extends around the corner to cover the store entrance.

### Relevant Planning History

- The site has an established use as a retail store (Use Class A1). However, no planning history is available online that confirms the planning permission originally granted to allow the erection of the building.
- In 1984, planning permission (ref.1984/1267) was granted for installation of a new shopfront.
- There have been six applications for illuminated and non-illuminated signage since 1963 up until 2009.

### The Proposed Scheme

- 2.5. This planning application proposes the refurbishment of the existing Carpertright building to facilitate its occupation by a new ALDI foodstore. The proposed use for the ground floor is as retail floorspace, and the first floor is proposed as a warehouse and welfare spaces. This is consistent with the unit's previous layout. The existing roof-top car park and public car park on the ground floor will be available to customers. The building will continue to be serviced in a similar way to the existing.
- 2.6. The existing building has a Gross Internal Area of 1,212 sqm at ground floor level and 1,323 sqm at first floor level. The proposed retail area is 967 sqm.
- 2.7. Consideration has been given to the layout of the store and the vertical circulation, which has been informed by a detailed assessment of the building and all existing features. The operational and servicing requirements of the store are also an important factor informing the layout.
- 2.8. The main changes proposed are as follows:
  - New stair tower to be constructed on the east elevation adjacent to the store entrance;

- New shop front glazing;
- Existing canopy to be refurbished on south west elevation;
- Existing canopy to be refurbished on north east of building;
- Two new passenger lifts;
- New fire exit arrangements;
- New bays for disabled and parent & child trollies;
- New cash office (secondary managers office on first floor);
- Existing goods lift pits will be redeveloped to serve ground and first floor;
- Existing goods lifts replaced;
- New raised platform incorporating a mini dock in loading bay;
- New lobby formed for access to existing protected stair on first floor;
- New internal plant on first floor;
- Existing structures on rooftop to be removed;
- New car park layout;
- New trolley park for approximately 60 trollies on the roof-top.

2.9. The existing brickwork will be cleaned and maintained, and the extension to the facade for the proposed stair tower will be constructed out of facing brickwork to match existing. The existing windows will be cleaned and refurbished in grey to match the new canopy fascia cladding and the shopfront. The mosaic tiles to Hepworth Way will be substituted with render to modernise the overall appearance.

2.10. The signage shown on the drawings will be subject to a separate application for advert consent.

### Ground Floor

2.1. It is proposed to remove the partition that divides the existing stock room/welfare area and the sales area to provide an extended retail area up to the existing stairs and fire escape doors. This will enable ALDI to make efficient use of the space available on the ground floor.

2.2. It is proposed to erect a full-height glazed curtain wall to the shopfront on Bridge Street, which will enhance the building's interaction with the public realm through the creation of an increased active frontage. This glazing wraps around the northeast corner of the building, forming the proposed store entrance in the most prominent position and in its original location. The shop front and store entrance are then further expressed by the existing cantilevered canopy, which will be re-clad to give it a clean and contemporary aesthetic.

2.3. The store entrance will remain in its current location, but will be adapted to facilitate two automatic doors, one for ingress and one for egress. A new interior

lobby will be added, with an internal trolley bay, adjacent to new lifts to the roof. A small area will be partitioned off to the north of the store to provide a cash office next to the tills.

- 2.4. The plant and servicing is situated away from the public realm to the rear of the building and on the first floor. The store will continue to be serviced via Drewitts Court Car Park, and it is proposed to add a new raised platform and mini-dock adjacent to the existing raised loading platform.

#### First Floor

- 2.5. The first floor layout is proposed to remain broadly as existing, with the largest area forming the ALDI warehouse, and new rooms provided along the Bridge Street frontage to provide staff welfare facilities and the manager's office.
- 2.6. The existing self-contained office suite to the south-west will be mothballed for future use. Access will be maintained from this suite through the warehouse for a future fire escape.
- 2.7. The vertical circulation cores will remain in their existing locations but two new passenger lifts to the roof will be added to the existing stair on the north-east elevation adjacent the main road junction. This stair will also be extended up to the roof level providing direct customer access from the car park to the store entrance. The existing goods lifts to the rear of the building will be replaced to provide lifts that serve both ground and first floor levels.
- 2.8. New refrigeration plant is proposed at first floor level on the north elevation to the east. It is therefore well away from neighbouring residential properties. Existing window openings in the vicinity will be infilled with feature louvres.

#### Roof

- 2.9. The roof level is a 'Pay & Display' car park run by Elmbridge Borough Council. The proposals involve demolishing any superfluous structures on the roof and to add a further public vertical circulation shaft to the north-east corner of the building. This circulation core will include a trolley bay at roof level and two new passenger lifts, as well as an extended stair linking ground to roof level.
- 2.10. The proposed number of parking bays at roof level will be 96, with two disabled bays. The car park will be repaired and re-surfaced where necessary, and will be given new white lining throughout. Provision for motorcycle parking is also included.



### 3. ALDI Stores Limited

#### Who is ALDI?

- 3.1. ALDI is one of the world's leading grocery retailers. The company has built a network of stores in Europe, the USA and Australia. ALDI first entered the UK market in 1990 and has now expanded to over 700 stores across England, Scotland and Wales.
- 3.2. ALDI stores offer the customer a carefully selected range of high quality, exclusive own label groceries at heavily discounted prices. These prices are guaranteed across the entire range of products. The aim is for goods to be sold with discounts of between 20–30% for a full shopping trolley.
- 3.3. ALDI regularly receives industry awards recognising the quality of its products and customer experience. ALDI was voted the nation's Favourite Supermarket and Favourite Wine Retailer at the 2017 Good Housekeeping Food Awards; named Fresh Produce Supermarket of the Year at the FPC Fresh Awards 2017; and Supermarket of the Year at the 2016 Retail Industry Awards. For recognition of investment in people, ALDI was crowned Employer of the Year at The Grocer Gold Awards 2017.

#### How ALDI is Different?

- 3.4. ALDI has a very different approach to food retailing than other food retailers based on simplicity and maximum efficiency at every stage of the business, from supplier to customer. This enables ALDI to sell high quality products, from a limited core range (compared with other supermarkets) of mainly exclusive own labels, at the lowest possible price consistently across the entire range. ALDI is a 'deep discount' retailer.
- 3.5. The main points of the trading philosophy include:
  - Maximum operational efficiency and cost control;
  - Standard merchandising through the stores;
  - Bulk displays in original shipping cases;
  - Efficient operation from supplier to customer;
  - Unique delivery system;
  - Efficient checkout system;
  - Carefully selected and limited core range of 1,500 products;
  - Own label high quality products;
  - Formidable buying power;
  - High volume and turnover per product;
  - Heavily discounted prices providing an average 20-30% saving across the entire range, compared with similar quality products.
- 3.6. As stated, ALDI stores offer a carefully selected and limited core range of good quality exclusive own labels at heavily discounted prices. Predominantly, the

limited range of goods relates to a reduced range of variations on the same product line compared to most other supermarkets. These are the most popular items: the ones most used and needed in every household.

- 3.7. The deliberate intention is to restrict the range of core goods to approximately 1,500 products in the interests of the consumer and operational efficiencies and pass these savings onto the customer.
- 3.8. This is unlike the larger supermarkets which stock in the region of 20,000 - 40,000 product lines, and more modest sized operators, with floor areas of 1,000 – 1,500sqm selling 2,500 – 4,000 products. ALDI do not sell cigarettes and tobacco products, stationary products and pharmaceutical products. The ALDI trading philosophy does not include a specialist butcher, fishmonger, in-store bakery, delicatessen or hot food counter which are commonplace in larger supermarkets. ALDI stores also do not accommodate in store cafes / restaurants or franchises such as photo processing, dry cleaning or opticians.
- 3.9. Whilst the core range of products is limited, ALDI offers a significant choice of locally sourced produce. Where possible ALDI's fresh meat and produce is UK sourced. Fresh fruit and vegetables are also sourced in the UK when in season and ALDI leads the way in supporting British farmers. In addition, ALDI works with a range of local businesses and suppliers in order to supply fresh bread, milk and other dairy products.
- 3.10. ALDI's stores dedicate approximately 20% of their floorspace to comparison goods. These goods are sold as 'special purchases' on a 'when it's gone, it's gone' basis. This approach is highly seasonal and there is a continued variation in the type of goods that may be on offer. This is a key difference for ALDI when compared with larger supermarkets that typically have 30-40% of their floor area for comparison goods, the majority of which is occupied by permanent product ranges.
- 3.11. How ALDI differs is demonstrated clearly by the trading philosophy. ALDI complement, rather than compete with, existing local traders, independent retailers and other supermarkets, as well as service providers, as ALDI customers use other facilities to fulfil their grocery and local service needs. This generates a propensity for linked trips and associated spin-off trade which brings qualitative benefits.

#### **Sustainable Development**

- 3.12. ALDI supports sustainable development and has a strong track record in delivering schemes that contribute to the needs of the local economy.

#### **Catchment**

- 3.13. As ALDI stores are of modest scale and fulfil a neighbourhood shopping role, it means more than one store can be accommodated in a Local Authority area. The catchment for a new store is localised and often shoppers to a new ALDI store are existing ALDI customers who have been travelling to their nearest store, but with a new store opening close by, this can reduce the need to travel.
- 3.14. ALDI's local presence can assist in clawing back expenditure being spent elsewhere by providing a food store where perhaps such a facility was not available previously. This is most important in locations where shops and services

are limited and access to stores elsewhere is difficult. A new store helps to retain expenditure within a given catchment area, to the benefit of the community.

### **Store Operation and Design**

- 3.15. The uniform internal layout of an ALDI store reflects the company philosophy of offering value for money through cost effective management and efficiency. The shop fittings are specifically designed and constructed to display the goods as received in their packing cases so there is no double handling of goods from packing cases to the shelves. It means new stock can be moved from the warehouse area to the shop floor quickly and in large quantities.
- 3.16. The operation of the store is designed to be efficient and practical for use by customers; ensuring the store offers inclusive accessibility to all. The efficient layout with typically only 4 or 5 aisles means customers can move through the store quickly. There is ease of access to goods with all shelving being within easy reach. As the range of goods is limited customers can find what they are looking for quickly. With goods being pre-packaged, such as fruit and vegetables, customer can identify goods quickly and shop efficiently. Importantly, there are long conveyors at the check-out that hold a customer's full shop to allow goods to be unloaded for scanning and payment quickly. Goods are re-loaded back into the trolley at the check-out and packing is undertaken at the customer's leisure beyond the check-out area.

### **Accessibility**

- 3.17. The local nature of many of ALDI's stores encourages high levels of pedestrian shoppers and users of public transport.
- 3.18. ALDI requires new stores to have car parking adjacent to cater for customers who choose this mode of transport. Most car trips to new ALDI stores are not new to the network but rather transferred or linked trips.

### **Residential Amenity**

- 3.19. The opening hours of ALDI stores are more limited than some other larger supermarkets, which can operate 24-hour. Currently ALDI stores operate 0800 to 2200 Monday to Saturday and for six hours between 1000 to 1700 on Sundays, to comply with Sunday Trading Laws.
- 3.20. As ALDI stores are located in residential areas, ALDI is committed to being a responsible neighbour and seeks to ensure the amenity of residents is maintained.

### **Job Creation and Training**

- 3.21. New ALDI stores generally employ between 30 - 50 staff. It is ALDI's preference to recruit staff locally. The company's remuneration and training policy reflects ALDI's firm belief that a well-trained and highly motivated workforce is essential to the success of the business. All hourly paid wages for store employees exceed the Government's National Living Wage and the Living Wage Foundation's recommended national rate. ALDI offers full training for all its positions and the schedule and facets of the training are tailored to the individual.
- 3.22. ALDI has two of the most successful apprentice schemes and graduate programmes in the UK. Apprentices are trained to work in all parts of the business

including at store, distribution, logistics and management level, as well as progression through to the Store Management Team.

- 3.23. ALDI's on-going graduate scheme secures an annual intake for the Area Management Programme. Trainee Area Managers spend a year shadowing an Area Manager before they take on three to four stores of their own to manage. The training covers the entire spectrum of running a retail operation and is a UK-wide programme.

## 4. Planning Policy Context

4.1. The following section provides a summary of the relevant national and local planning policy relevant to the proposals.

### National Planning Policy Framework (July 2018)

4.2. The revised National Planning Policy Framework was published on 24 July 2018 and sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The revised Framework replaces the previous National Planning Policy Framework published in March 2012.

### Presumption in Favour

4.3. A 'Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development' is central to the NPPF. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that:

*"Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development."*

4.4. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF requires that for decision-making this means:

- approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or
- where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
  - I. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
  - II. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

### Decision-making

4.5. Paragraph 38 of the NPPF states that:

*"Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area."*

4.6. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible

### Retail Guidance

4.7. National policy applying to proposals involving retail development is set out at Paragraphs 85-90 of the NPPF.

4.8. Paragraph 86 of the NPPF confirms that Local Authorities should apply a 'sequential test' to planning applications for main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre and are not in accordance with an up-to-date Local Plan.

- 4.9. Such proposals are required to be located in town centres, then edge-of-centre locations, and only if suitable sites are not available should out-of-centre sites be considered. The NPPF advises that in considering edge and out-of-centre sites, preference should be given to sites that are accessible and well connected to the town centre.
- 4.10. Town centres are defined in the NPPF as city, town, district and local centres, but exclude small parades of shops of purely neighbourhood significance. The relevant area is to be defined on the Local Authority proposals map, including the Primary Shopping Area (PSA) and areas predominantly occupied by main town centre uses within or adjacent to the PSA.
- 4.11. Paragraph 89 of the NPPF confirms that when assessing retail proposals outside town centres, local planning authorities should require an impact assessment if the development is over a proportionate, locally set floorspace threshold. If there is no threshold, the NPPF confirms that the default threshold is 2,500 sqm.

### Design Considerations

- 4.12. Paragraph 127 states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:
- will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
  - are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
  - are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
  - establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
  - optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
  - create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

### Development Plan

- 4.13. The planning policy context is provided by the policies of the following documents:
- 4.14. The **Elmbridge Core Strategy**, which was adopted in July 2011, is the principal planning document that sets out the vision, spatial strategy and core policies that are used for shaping future development in the Borough up to 2026.
- 4.15. The **Elmbridge Development Management Plan**, adopted in 2015, contains more detailed policies that all planning applications are assessed against.

- 4.16. The adopted Local Plan Proposals Maps show that the application site is located within the Main Settlement Area boundary of Walton-on-Thames and within Walton-on-Thames Town Centre boundary.

#### **Elmbridge Core Strategy**

- 4.17. Policy CS1 - Spatial Strategy states that new development will be delivered in accordance with a clear spatial strategy, which provides the most sustainable way to accommodate growth supported by high quality infrastructure, whilst respecting the unique character of the Borough and the local distinctiveness of individual settlements.
- 4.18. Policy CS1 also states that new development will be directed towards previously developed land within the existing built up areas. Walton is named as a main settlement area and has been identified as the one of most sustainable locations within Elmbridge. It provides a broad range of uses and services, as well as opportunities to accommodate new development.
- 4.19. Policy CS1 states that town and village centres will continue to be the focus for new development, providing a range of services in well-designed environments that are accessible to everyone. Walton-on-Thames is designated as a Centre within the hierarchy and further town centre development will be encouraged where this adds to the overall vitality and viability of the centre; is of an appropriate scale; and makes a positive contribution to the significant environmental improvements that have and continue to take place in the town. All new developments must be high quality, well designed and locally distinctive.
- 4.20. Policy CS3 – Walton-on-Thames states that recent public and private investment will continue in order to build on recent success and to ensure that high quality infrastructure and services are provided for all residents, delivering healthy and sustainable communities. Environmental improvements along Walton High Street will further raise the profile and improve the shopping experience within the town centre.
- 4.21. Policy CS3 also states that within the town centre, new development will be promoted in a way that delivers high-quality, well-designed public spaces and buildings, makes efficient use of land and adds to the centre's attractiveness and competitiveness. Sites within the town centre will be considered for high-density mixed-use developments. A diversity of uses that contribute to the centre's overall vitality and viability will be supported.
- 4.22. Policy CS18 - Town Centre Uses states that town and village centres will continue to serve a distinctive multi-functional role, in keeping with the hierarchy defined in Policy CS1, responding to the variety of needs of local residents and businesses. All town centre uses will be considered within the context of their contribution to the vitality and viability of the centre and their impact on and ability to serve local needs, as set out in the place policies relating to individual settlements.
- 4.23. Policy CS18 also states that in order to control an appropriate balance of uses within town and district centres, A1 retail uses will be protected and concentrated within primary shopping frontages. Secondary shopping frontages will offer greater opportunities for a diversity of town centre uses that offer a direct service to the public and require a street level presence, as long as the use does not have significant harmful effects on the frontage or town centre role.

- 4.24. Policy CS25 - Travel and Accessibility states that the Council will promote improvements to sustainable travel, and accessibility to services through a variety of measures.

#### **Elmbridge Development Management Plan**

- 4.25. Policy DM1 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development states that when considering development proposals, the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. Planning applications that accord with the policies in this Local Plan will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.26. Policy DM2 - Design and Amenity states that all new development should achieve high quality design, which demonstrates environmental awareness and contributes to climate change mitigation and adaptation. The Council will permit development proposals that demonstrate that they have taken full account of the criteria set out within the policy wording
- 4.27. Policy DM7 - Access and Parking states that in regard to access the layout and siting of accesses should be acceptable in terms of amenity, capacity, safety, pollution, noise and visual impact. Access to and from the highway should be safe and convenient for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists. Provisions for loading, unloading and the turning of service vehicles are expected to be designed into the scheme ensuring highway and pedestrian safety.
- 4.28. Policy DM7 also states that public off street parking will continue to be provided where it supports the economic or recreational use of the immediate area and provides dual use allowing parking for residents and shoppers/employees, particularly in town centres.
- 4.29. Policy DM15 - Advertisements, Shopfronts and Signage states that permission will be granted provided that shopfront proposals demonstrate a high quality of design, which complements the original design, proportions, materials and detailing of the shopfront, surrounding streetscene and the building of which it forms part. The Council will resist the removal of shopfronts of architectural or historic interest.
- 4.30. New shopfronts must be designed to allow equal access for all users. Blinds, canopies or shutters where acceptable in principle must be appropriate to the character of the shopfront and its setting. In sensitive areas, rigid and non-retractable canopies will generally be unacceptable.



## 5. Planning Assessment

### Principle of Retail Development

- 5.1. The application proposal relates to an existing unit within Walton-on-Thames town centre. It is the primary location for retail uses and planning policy at all levels supports the nature of development proposed.
- 5.2. The retail use on the site was established by the original planning permission, which was granted for a Woolworths store many years ago. On this basis, it is considered that the principle of retail development on this site, and within the wider area, is established.
- 5.3. An ALDI store is a modest-scale supermarket with a limited product range (compared with major supermarkets) often fulfilling a neighbourhood shopping role as well as attracting customers from the surrounding area. ALDI stores do not compete directly with local specialist food shops or durable goods outlets, and ALDI's customers generally use other shops and stores as well as ALDI in order to fulfil their grocery shopping and local service needs. ALDI is, therefore, complementary to the existing pattern of trading in existing local/town centre shopping areas.
- 5.4. The proposed alterations to the existing building at Bridge Street to facilitate a new ALDI foodstore will provide enhanced accessible and sustainable neighbourhood shopping facilities that will be available to all residents of this area. Additionally, the extended provision of low-priced goods, will benefit those on lower incomes and will replace the provision lost when the previous ALDI store (on Church Street) closed.
- 5.5. In addition to the physical refurbishment of the site, together with the increased retail choice and spin-off trade, the proposed ALDI store will also deliver a considerable economic boost to Walton-on-Thames through the creation of up to 40 local jobs. These include a mix of both full and part time positions, which is welcomed in the modern job market.
- 5.6. The proposed development will improve the efficiency and operation of the building to facilitate a new ALDI foodstore, as well as ensuring a good customer experience, and meeting their ever-changing demands.

### Retail Policy

- 5.7. The NPPF states that when assessing applications for retail development inside of town centres, which are in accordance with an up-to-date Local Plan, local planning authorities should not require an impact assessment. The site is located within a Walton Town Centre and therefore an impact test is not required in this instance.
- 5.8. As set out above, it is clear that the application site has an established Class A1 retail use for many years. It is also acknowledged that the application site is situated within a designated retail centre in retail policy terms as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework NPPF (July 2018).
- 5.9. Paragraph 86 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should only apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre and are not in accordance with an up-to-date Local Plan.

The site is located within a Walton-on-Thames town centre and therefore the sequential test is not applicable in this instance.

- 5.10. The application site is well placed to complement existing retail uses, and facilitate linked trips between the proposed ALDI foodstore and other existing retail uses at in the town centre. Furthermore, the site is located in close proximity to residential properties allowing for walk in customers, as well as by public transport and cycling.

### Highways and Parking

- 5.11. The roof level of the unit already provides a 'Pay & Display' car park run by Elmbridge Borough Council. The proposals involve demolishing any superfluous structures on the roof and add a further public vertical circulation shaft to the north-east corner of the building. This circulation core will include a trolley bay at roof level and two new passenger lifts, as well as an extended stair linking ground to roof level.
- 5.12. The proposed number of parking bays at roof level will be 96, with two disabled bays. The car park will be repaired and re-surfaced where necessary, and will be given new white lining throughout. Provision for motorcycle parking is also included. ALDI are confident that the existing number of car parking spaces is sustainable in operational terms and will not lead to displaced parking.
- 5.13. The proposals do not alter the vehicle and transport links into the site and due to the nature of the proposal, the development will not result in an intensification of traffic at and surrounding the site.
- 5.14. The site is in a sustainable location that delivers a high level of multi-modal transport. This actively encourages a reduction both in the need to travel, and in particular the need to travel by car. The impact of the development proposals on the surrounding transportation network should be considered sustainable and acceptable.

### Layout and Access

- 5.15. The store entrance will remain in its existing location, but will be converted to two automatic doors, one for ingress and one for egress. The building orientation and relationship with the rest of the site remains unchanged.
- 5.16. Consideration has been given to the layout of the store and the vertical circulation, which has been informed by a detailed assessment of the building and all existing features. The operational and servicing requirements of the store are also an important factor informing the layout.
- 5.17. It is proposed to remove the partition that divides the existing stock room/welfare area and the sales area to provide an extended retail area up to the existing stairs and fire escape doors. This will enable ALDI to make efficient use of the space available on the ground floor.
- 5.18. A new internal lobby will be added, with an internal trolley bay, adjacent to new lifts to the roof. A cash office will be provided next to the tills.
- 5.19. The plant and servicing is situated away from the public realm to the rear of the building and on the first floor. The store will continue to be serviced via Drewitts

Court Car Park, and it is proposed to add a new raised platform and mini-dock adjacent to the existing raised loading platform.

### Design

- 5.20. It has been stated previously that the ALDI site is currently in an active retail use. The occupation by ALDI does not fundamentally alter the characteristics or operations at the site.
- 5.21. Paragraph 127 of the NPPF states that decisions should aim to ensure developments '*...will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development*'.
- 5.22. Policy CS17 - Local Character, Density and Design of the Elmbridge Core Strategy (2011) and Policy DM2 - Design and amenity of the Elmbridge Development Management Plan (2015) are the overarching design policy of the Local Plan. They require high standards of design for all development.
- 5.23. The design of the proposed alterations does not fundamentally alter the architectural style of the building. The proposed external alterations are of a similar scale and form as the existing building, and will match the character of the local area. The improvements to the building entrance and erection of new shopfront glazing will improve natural daylighting and reduce the internal electrical lighting loads.
- 5.24. On this basis, it is considered that the proposals are in accordance with national policy, Policy CS17 of the Elmbridge Core Strategy (2011), and Policy DM15 and Policy of the Elmbridge Development Management Plan (2015).

### Sustainability

- 5.25. High quality design is integral to the scheme. This informs the specification and detailing of materials, to provide a robust and energy efficient building fabric for the building.
- 5.26. The future use of the premises by ALDI will ensure optimal use of resources and minimise waste. New refrigeration and ventilation plant will be provided as part of a new Building Management System.
- 5.27. Store heating will be provided through recycling of waste heat from the refrigeration plant to optimize energy usage. LED lighting will be used throughout the development.
- 5.28. Wherever possible, materials required for construction will be procured locally. The improvements to the building entrance and canopy, and the erection of new shopfront glazing will improve natural daylighting and reduce the internal electrical lighting loads. Waste will be minimised by the adoption of the national site waste strategy of reduce, reuse, and recycle.
- 5.29. Water consumption will be minimised by the use of water meters and water efficient fixtures and fittings. Where possible and taking into consideration the site and building use constraints, the internal layout has been optimised to ensure that additional energy consumption due to overshadowing has been minimised in line with Passive Solar Design guidance.

## 6. Summary and Conclusions

- 6.1. This Planning Statement is submitted by Planning Potential, on behalf of ALDI Stores Ltd (ALDI), in support of a full planning application for the refurbishment of the existing Carpentryright building to facilitate its occupation as a new ALDI foodstore.
- 6.2. This Statement addresses all of the relevant planning policy considerations associated with the proposed development, but should be read in conjunction with other documents and drawings submitted in support of this application.
- 6.3. The existing building has a Gross Internal Area of 1,212 sqm at ground floor level and 1,323m<sup>2</sup> at first floor level. The proposed retail area is 967 sqm and this will be located on the ground floor.
- 6.4. The proposed use for the ground floor is as retail floorspace, and the first floor is proposed as a warehouse and welfare spaces. The existing roof-top car park and public car park on the ground floor will continue to be available to customers.
- 6.5. The site comprises an existing established retail store with roof-top public car parking. Consideration has been given to the layout of the store and the vertical circulation, which has been informed by a thorough appraisal of the building and all existing features.
- 6.6. The proposals give the opportunity to refurbish and improve a neglected building in a prominent public position within the heart of Walton-on-Thames.
- 6.7. Given that the site already has an established A1 retail use and is within the defined Town Centre boundary and Primary Shopping Frontage, its re-occupation by a Class A1 retailer is clearly in accordance with relevant planning policy at all levels. A retail impact assessment and a sequential test are not required and have not been undertaken in this instance.
- 6.8. The design of the proposed extension does not fundamentally alter the architectural style of the building. The proposals will seek to improve the retail offer and experience for existing customers in the Town Centre, to meet their ever-changing demands. Traffic levels will not intensify at or surrounding the site.
- 6.9. The proposal will provide beneficial economic development, significantly enhancing the local shopping choice within Walton-on-Thames and the surrounding area. Furthermore, the proposals will address the limited discount foodstore provision in the area, and assist in retaining expenditure in the area and reducing the need to travel to towns outside of Walton-on-Thames.
- 6.10. On the basis of the consideration of the proposals set out in this Statement (and other supporting documents), we consider that the application proposals represent appropriate development and comply with relevant planning policy at all levels.
- 6.11. We therefore consider that when assessed against relevant planning policy, the application should be granted permission.