

Planning application no.	18/01260/FUL
Site	Aldi, Goldthorn Hill, Wolverhampton
Proposal	Extension of existing food retail store with associated alterations to existing car parking, access, servicing & landscaping.
Ward	Blakenhall;
Applicant	Mr Hamish Latchem ALDI Stores Limited
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor John C Reynolds
Accountable Director	Richard Lawrence, Director of Regeneration
Originating service	Planning
Accountable employee	Tracey Homfray Planning Officer Tel 01902 555641 Email tracey.homfray@wolverhampton.gov.uk

1.0 Summary recommendation:

1.1 Refuse.

2.0 Application site

2.1 The majority of the site is occupied by the existing Aldi Retail Store, car parking, and landscaping. Two additional residential properties, nos11 and 13 Goldthorn Hill, and part of a residential garden area to no15 Goldthorn Hill, would be incorporated into the site for development. The site has a prime corner position, at the traffic light junction to Dudley Road Local Centre and Goldthorn Hill. The site abuts boundaries with residential properties, within Goldthorn Hill, Neville Avenue and Longdon Avenue south/west of the site. The surrounding area is predominantly residential.

3.0 Application details

3.1 The current size of the Aldi store retail area would increase from 940sqm to 1260sqm, with the gross external floor area increasing from 1394sqm to 1767sqm. The proposal incorporates design changes to the northern elevation, facing Goldthorn Hill, a 42sqm extension to the service area along the southern elevation, for a new loading dock, and

an extension/relocation of the existing car park, formalising a new vehicular/service access from Goldthorn Hill.

4.0 Relevant policy documents

- 4.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- 4.2 Wolverhampton Unitary Development Plan (UDP)
Black Country Core Strategy (BBCS)

5.0 Publicity

5.1 Four letters of objection:

- Loss of Car Parking;
- Lack of Car Parking;
- Loss of Housing Stock;
- Traffic Disruption during and after development;
- Highway/Pedestrian Safety due to the busy nature of the store in a residential area;
- Disruption to neighbouring properties;
- Increase in volume of traffic;
- Impact on the character of the residential area.

6.0 Consultees

6.1 Transportation:

Transportation are objecting to this planning application due to the impact the proposed increase in store size, combined with the reduction in car parking provision, would have on the development site and the wider highway network.

7.0 Legal implications

7.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report (KR/28122018/A).

8.0 Appraisal

8.1 The three key issues in this case are urban design, highway safety and the impact on neighbours' amenities.

Urban Design

8.2 The proposal involves the purchase and demolition of a pair of semi-detached houses (and half the garden of the property next door) and their replacement with surface car parking. It is a well established urban design principle that good streets are typically defined by buildings that are positioned along and face onto the street, providing a sense of definition. Goldthorn Hill has traditionally designed residential properties facing each other across the street which contributes to a street scene with an attractive character.

This is particularly important because Goldthorn Hill is an important east west route in the city and this is a prominent location. The loss of further street frontage to be replaced by car parking will be detrimental of the character of the street scene. This is not good urban design which is required by our development plan policies (D4, D5, D6, D9) and the NPPF.

- 8.3 The current store location has very little presence in the street scene, especially on this prominent corner location, being set well back on the plot to the far south/west corner, and car parking surrounding the frontage, to both Wolverhampton Road East and Golthorn Hill. Townscape and landscape should be reinforced at this retail location, especially as this is a very prominent corner location at the entrance to the Dudley Road Local Centre. This would require site specific design/layout solutions to enhance the quality of this store, which is currently lacking in local distinctiveness, and contributing very little to the surrounding area.
- 8.4 The proposal seeks to extend the existing store to the northern and southern elevations, and to relocate current carparking along Golthorn Hill, which incorporates the demolition of a pair of semidetached houses at nos11 and 13 Goldthorn Hill, and removal of half the rear garden area to no15 Goldthorn Hill to facilitate this. The relocation of the car park further along this residential road at Goldthorn Hill, would result in a detrimental impact to the residential street scene, with the loss of two residential dwellings and replacement hard surfacing, for car parking.
- 8.5 Parking and servicing should be positioned away from the public realm, and for buildings to be prominent in the street scene to promote active street frontages. The current layout fails to address this, with the car parking completely dominating the street frontage, providing an example of how parking can result in a deadening effect to the appearance of a premises and the street scene it relates to, especially in this prime corner location.
- 8.6 The current application exacerbates this situation further, with the proposed demolition of a pair of semidetached houses, and the increase of hardstanding with the relocation/extension of the car park further along this residential road. This results in the loss of two attractive residential properties to the detriment of the character and appearance of the street scene to the detriment of this residential area.

Highway Safety

- 8.7 The new arrangement of car parking, access, and manoeuvrability lacks detail/information, to make an informed decision. Specific detail would be required to confirm that the widening of the site access off Goldthorn Road, would be sufficient for larger vehicles to entre/exit the site in a safe manner. A Transport Assessment would be necessary to demonstrate what impact the traffic generated by the new store would have on the Goldthorn Road Entrance and the Traffic Signal Controlled Junction at Parkfield Road \ Dudley Road. A car parking survey would also be necessary to demonstrate what the existing car parking occupation levels were and therefore what impact the reduction in parking would have, and vehicle track detail to ensure that the new loading bay would work.

- 8.8 An increased store size could result in additional customers accessing the development site. This would generate an additional parking demand at the development site, and additional vehicle movements at an already busy location with a history of accidents.
- 8.9 A Transport Statement has been submitted but it has failed to address concerns over level of parking provided for an extended store. The additional traffic likely to be generated by this proposal would increase vehicle movements and an increased likelihood of accidents occurring, which is a major road safety concern. The submitted Transport Assessment shows that the existing car park does, at times, exceed 85% occupancy. At and above these occupancy levels, the operation of the car park can become inefficient with motorists finding it difficult to locate a vacant parking space and the car park itself can become congested as drivers drive around searching for empty spaces. The proposed reduction in the car parking provision for this development would increase the amount of times that this 'efficiently operating capacity' would be exceeded. This would be a major concern because any problems within the site itself could lead to the problem being extended out onto Goldthorn Hill, at a location that is in such close proximity to the major traffic signal controlled junction of Dudley Road \ Parkfield Road \ Wolverhampton Road East and Goldthorn Hill.
- 8.10 Due to the increase in size of the store an Electric Vehicle Charging Point for vehicles would need to be installed as per the standards set out in the Black Country Air Quality Supplementary Planning Document.

Impact on neighbours' amenities

- 8.11 The proposed car parking area would be unneighbourly as it would dominate the eastern and southern boundaries of adjoining properties. No15 Goldthorn Hill's rear garden would be significantly reduced and would be dominated with parking along both eastern and southern boundaries, as would no17 Goldthorn Hill along its rear eastern boundary, and no28 Neville Avenue along its eastern boundary. There is very little landscaping or buffering between the parking area and these boundaries, therefore, their private rear garden areas would be subjected to vehicles approaching, parking and manoeuvring in and out of spaces, and the noise associated with them. This would be to the detrimental to the amenities of current and future occupiers.

Other issues

- 8.12 The applicant's agent has set out how the proposal accords with retail planning policy; this is not disputed.
- 8.13 The applicant's agent has also set out Aldi's rationale for the proposed store:
- A modernised store would provide a better shopping experience for customers;
 - The need to improve the efficient operation of the store, particularly in terms of re-stocking the shelves;
 - The range of items stocked would not increase but the environment would be more spacious for shoppers.

None of these benefits are disputed but they would not outweigh the harm identified above on the grounds of urban design, highway safety and impact on neighbours' amenities.

8.14 A neighbour has raised the issue of the loss of housing stock. Whilst the loss of two perfectly good family homes is regrettable it would not in itself be significant enough to justify a planning reason for refusal in this case.

9.0 Conclusion

9.1 The proposal would result in a detrimental impact to the character and appearance of the residential street scene to Goldthorn Hill, adversely impacts on neighbours' amenities and fails to provide specific information to ensure that the reduced parking and new layout/access arrangement has no detrimental impact to highway/pedestrian safety, all contrary to the development plan.

10.0 Detail recommendation

10.1 Refuse planning permission for the following reasons:

- Insufficient detail/information with respect to Transport Statement to consider Highway and Pedestrian Safety;
- Urban Design and Character/Appearance of Street Scene;
- Neighbouring Amenities.

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