

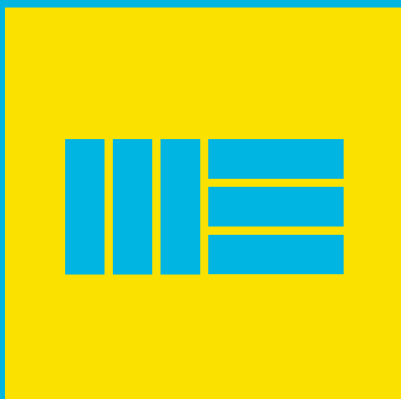
UNIT 1

GEORGE RICHARDS WAY

ALTRINCHAM RETAIL PARK

PLANNING AND RETAIL STATEMENT

FEBRUARY 2021



CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION	3
2.0 THE APPLICATION SITE	5
3.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT	7
4.0 PROPOSED OCCUPIER – LIDL RETAIL OPERATION.....	9
5.0 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY.....	16
6.0 RETAIL CONSIDERATIONS.....	23
7.0 DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	30
8.0 HIGHWAYS CONSIDERATIONS.....	33
9.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	35

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning and Statement (PRS) has been prepared on behalf of our clients, Orchard Street Investment Management LLP and Lidl (Great Britain) Limited in respect of a full planning application at Altrincham Retail Park, George Richards Way, Altrincham. The application is submitted jointly with Rapleys LLP.
- 1.2 The development proposals comprise the extension and sub-division the existing Homebase retail unit, to create two retail units. Unit 1 will comprise a retail warehouse unit and associated garden centre for occupation by Homebase and Unit 1A will comprise a standard format discount convenience foodstore for occupation by Lidl.
- 1.3 Together the proposals will deliver approximately 40 new jobs and maintain 50 existing jobs within the existing Homebase store and represent a direct investment of circa £1.3m into the local economy. These material socio-economic benefits will be delivered within 12 months of the grant of planning permission. Conversely, were the Council to not grant planning permission and the proposal would not proceed, it would be unviable for Homebase to continue to trade from its existing store, resulting in its closure and the loss of 50 jobs.
- 1.4 This application also proposes a new left-out egress from the site, a new pedestrian access from George Richards Way, and related reconfiguration of the existing car park, including the provision of additional cycle parking.
- 1.5 This planning application is submitted following the refusal of an application (the 'Previous Application'), application reference 98127/FUL/19, for a similar development in July 2020. The application was refused for 2 reasons only; insufficient information provided within the application to demonstrate compliance with the sequential test in relation to one particular site (the Altair site), and the limited information provided in support of the new vehicle egress from the car park onto George Richards Way to demonstrate that the new egress will not have an impact on the safety of the local road network.
- 1.6 This application seeks to address the two reasons for refusal. Additional information is provided by the prospective tenant confirming that a) Lidl are contractually committed to the delivery of both the application site and the Altair site and b) in relation to both the suitability and availability of the Altair site for development of the type proposed. The vehicular egress onto George Richards Way has been revised in consultation with the Local Highway Authority and Transport for Greater Manchester, and addresses the concerns raised during the consideration of the previous application. It should be noted that the applicants consider that the previously submitted access arrangements remain wholly acceptable and appropriate and the revised proposals are included in an effort to meet the Council's concerns.
- 1.7 Those aspects of the planning application 98127/FUL/19 which the Council found acceptable/did not raise a reason for refusal against are not revisited by this submission. For example, the Council concluded that the proposals would not result in a "significant adverse impact" on town centres when having regard to the two strands of the impact test as set out in national policy. Therefore, for the purposes of this application, we have not re-considered retail impact issues. Further, the proposals were found to be acceptable in all other respects including on matters of traffic generation and highways capacity, drainage and flood risk, landscaping, crime and security, ecology and heritage.
- 1.8 Unit 1 will measure 3,612sqm GIA and the associated garden centre will occupy 1,231sqm GIA and be occupied by Homebase. Unit 1A will measure 1,858sqm gross internal area (GIA) with a net sales area of 1,272sqm and be occupied by Lidl.
- 1.9 The application should be read in conjunction with the supporting application documents as set out in the accompanying covering letter. The remainder of the Statement is structured as follows:

- **The Application Site and Relevant Planning History** – This section provides an overview of the application Site and summarises the relevant planning history at the Retail Park;
- **The Proposed Development** – This section provides an overview of the development proposals.
- **Relevant Planning Policy** – This section identifies the relevant planning policy at a national and local level which the development proposals will be assessed against.
- **Retail Considerations** - Sequential test considerations are assessed within this section of the PRS.
- **Development Management Considerations** – the relevant development management considerations are set out within this section;
- **Highways Considerations** – the impact of the proposal in highways terms and details of the revised egress arrangement on to George Richards Way is set out within this section;
- **Summary and Conclusions** – Finally we provide a summary of the key planning issues and provide the conclusions of the assessment. We conclude that the proposed development is fully in line with national and local policy and should therefore be considered favourably.

1.10 It should be noted that the applicants have appealed the Council's decision to refuse planning application 98127/FUL/19 (Appeal Ref. APP/Q4245/W/21/3267048). This planning application is submitted without prejudice to the appeal and in an effort to negotiate a planning permission and thereby avoid unnecessary cost and delays to the delivery of a sustainable economic development.

2.0 THE APPLICATION SITE

- 2.1 The application site (the Site) comprises the existing Homebase store and associated garden centre area at Unit 1, Altrincham Retail Park, George Richards Way, Altrincham, WA14 5GR. The site also includes the area of customer car parking sitting to the front and side of Unit 1, and the servicing area to the rear.
- 2.2 The site extends to approximately 1.81ha in size. Site Location Plan identifying the site is enclosed as **Appendix 1**.
- 2.3 The site is located approximately 1.4km north west of Altrincham Town Centre and 3.5km south west of Sale Town Centre. Adjacent to the site is the Currys PC World unit and additional car parking associated with the retail park.
- 2.4 To the north lies predominantly residential uses, separated by Huxley Street, while the site is bound to the east by the A56 Manchester Road and to the South by George Richards Way.
- 2.5 Access to the site is via the current main access into Altrincham Retail Park from George Richards Way and then via a mini-roundabout associated with the internal road layout of the retail park.
- 2.6 There are two dedicated pedestrian accesses associated with the site – the first to the south at the access into Altrincham Retail Park and the second to the east from Manchester Road. These provide direct access to the site and correspond closely with existing bus stops. Dedicated footways are provided internally within the site to allow safe pedestrian movement, as well as along Manchester Road and George Richards Way. The two signalised junctions of Manchester Road / George Richards Way and George Richards Way / Altrincham Retail Park Access allow safe and controlled crossing points along these aforementioned main roads.
- 2.7 The site benefits from good accessibility by public transport. Bus stops are located less than 100m from the site, with provision at the main access to Altrincham Retail Park on George Richards Way as well as to the east of the site on Manchester Road. These provide frequent bus services, including travel to Broadheath, Sale and Warrington (281/ CC5A services from George Richards Way) as well as Central Manchester, the Trafford Centre, Streford, Wythenshawe, Davyhulme, Moss Side (247 / 263 / 755 / 758 services from Manchester Road).

PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.8 The most relevant planning application in this instance relates to an almost identical proposal, (application ref. 98127/FUL/19) refused by the Council in July 2020.
- 2.9 As set out above, two reasons for refusal were set out within the decision notice, relating to the compliance with the sequential test, and the requirement for additional evidence to demonstrate that the design of the new egress onto George Richards Way from the retail park does not impact on the safety of the local highway network and its users.
- 2.10 A summary of the planning history associated with the site is set out below:
- **Application reference H38342** – Outline planning permission for the demolition of existing buildings and structures and redevelopment of site as a retail warehouse park including non-food retail units, garden centre, 2 restaurants and associated parking employment development and construction of new access road. **Approved 7 October 1994**

- **Application reference H39892** – Demolition of existing buildings & structures & redevelopment of site as a retail warehouse park including non-food retail units, garden centre, 2 restaurants & associated parking, employment development and construction of new access road (details of siting and means of access). **Approved 4 January 1995.**
- **Application reference H39994** – Submission of reserved matters (siting and means of access) for demolition of existing buildings & structures & redevelopment of site as a retail warehouse park including non-food retail units (140,000 sq.ft), garden centre (13,700 sq.ft), restaurant (3,000 sq.ft) and associated car parking (751 spaces): employment development and construction of new access road. **Approved 16 November 1994.**
- **Application reference H39995** – Demolition of existing buildings & structures & erection of extension to retail warehouse park approved in outline under app. H/OUT/38342 comprising non-food retail unit (39,400) sq.ft. **Approved 15 February 1995.**
- **Application reference H40410** – Variation of condition, attached to reserved matters approval H/ARM/39892, in order to permit outside storage to take place within garden centre area as delineated on attached plan. **Approved 29 March 1995.**
- **Application reference H41090** - Erection of retail warehouse development comprising 16,666 sq.m of non-food retail units; a 1273 sq.m garden centre, a 214 sq.m restaurant with associated car parking, access & servicing facilities, following demolition of existing buildings. (details of siting, means of access, design and external appearance following the grant of outline planning permission H/OUT/38342 and H/OUT/39995). **Approved 30 August 1995.**
- **Application reference 78734/CLEUD/2012** - Certificate of Lawfulness of Existing Development for the installation of mezzanine floors in Units 1, 2-3, 5, 6, 8A, 8B, 9 and 10, for the purposes falling within Class A1 of the schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended). **Approved 26 July 2012.**

3.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 The development proposals comprise the extension and sub-division the existing Homebase retail unit, to create two retail units. Unit 1 will comprise a retail warehouse unit and associated garden centre for continued occupation by Homebase, and Unit 1A will comprise a discount convenience foodstore to be occupied by Lidl. This element of the scheme is identical to planning application 98127/FUL/19.
- 3.2 This application also proposes a new left-out egress from the site, a new pedestrian access from George Richards Way, and related reconfiguration of the existing car park and provision of additional cycle parking facilities. This proposed arrangement differs from planning application 98127/FUL19 and has been included to address the comments of the Local Highway Authority and Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM).
- 3.3 Table 1 below sets out the proposed unit floorspace reconfiguration

Table 1: Proposed Floorspace breakdown

	Existing Homebase	Proposed Homebase (Unit 1)	Proposed Lidl (Unit 1A)	Total Proposed	Difference
Ground Floor	3,664	2,883	1,858	4,691	+1,027
Mezzanine Floor	1,352	779	0	779	-573
Total GIA	5,016	3612	1,858	5,470	+454
Garden Centre	1,295	1,231	0	1,231	-64
Total	6,311	4,843	1,858	6,701	+390

- 3.4 The application will result in a net uplift in GIA of 454sqm. However, taking account of the reduction in the size of the garden centre area, this reduces the increase to 390sqm in terms of the useable area for Class E(a) retail sales.
- 3.5 The new smaller Unit 1 will enable Homebase to utilise their floorspace more efficiently, better addressing the changing retail needs of customers within the catchment. Notwithstanding this, the store will still continue to sell a similar range of products, including paint and decorating equipment, kitchens and bathrooms, garden and outdoor products, lighting and electrical, furniture and home storage, and other products associated with the DIY retail market.
- 3.6 **Appendix 2** includes correspondence from Homebase confirming their requirements for and commitment to the proposed new Unit 1.
- 3.7 In relation to proposed new Unit 1A, Lidl has confirmed that the net sales area for the proposed store is 1,272sqm, of which (80% of net floor space) will be for convenience good sales and 20% of net floor space will be for comparison goods sales.

- 3.8 The existing building will be updated through the provision of new anthracite columns to the front of the unit and replacement moonstone Kingspan cladding at upper levels. New service doors will also be created on the rear elevation, as well as the side elevation to the garden centre. The front entrance to the garden centre will comprise brickwork, with aluminium framed glazing to allow natural light to filter through. A new entrance to the garden centre will also be created on the side elevation.
- 3.9 The proposed Lidl store will provide a clean and contemporary design, which will feature a single height glazed entrance including double height glazing along the eastern elevation of the store. The refurbished store will provide a dedicated in-store bakery along with welfare facilities for staff and customers.
- 3.10 The Design and Access Statement that accompanies this application sets out further detail on the appearance of the proposed retail units, complementing the visual character of the retail park.
- 3.11 A new service yard will be created to the rear of the unit to enable servicing to the Unit 1, while the Unit 1A will utilise the existing dedicated service area to the north of the building. Delivery vehicles will drive into the site in forward gear and reverse into the delivery bay, where products will be deposited within the warehouse. All Lidl store waste will be stored within the warehousing area and will be collected at the same time as deliveries, thereby minimising HGV movements.
- 3.12 The application proposals include the construction of a new egress from the car park onto George Richards Way, approximately halfway between the two signalised junctions. The new egress will assist in the reducing pressure on the existing car park access junction, leading to a more efficient and balanced use of parking spaces within the wider car park.
- 3.13 The following trading and delivery hours were agreed with the Council as part of for the for Unit 1A:

Trading Hours

- 8am-10pm Monday to Saturdays (including Bank Holidays); and
- 10am-4pm on Sundays

Delivery Hours

- 8am-8pm Mondays to Saturdays; and
- 10am-4pm on Sundays

- 3.14 The opening and servicing hours of the Homebase store are to remain as existing.

4.0 PROPOSED OCCUPIER – LIDL RETAIL OPERATION

4.1 This section provides an overview of the Lidl retail operation, including the position of the company within the UK retail market and its key trading characteristics.

POSITION WITHIN THE MARKET

4.2 Lidl and Schwarz Grocery Wholesale was founded in Germany in the 1930s, since then the company has diversified into hypermarkets under the trading name 'Kaufland' and discount foodstores known as 'Lidl'. Today the Schwarz Group is one of the largest grocery retailers in Europe.

4.3 Since establishing itself in Great Britain in 1994, Lidl has experienced continuous growth and today has over 25,000 employees, over 800 stores and 13 distribution centres in England, Scotland and Wales. As part of the Schwarz retail group, Lidl is one of Europe's leading organisations in the food retail industry. With a presence in 32 countries around the world, the supermarket, which has more than 310,000 employees globally, currently operates approximately 11,200 stores and more than 200 warehouses and distribution centres in 29 countries globally. The family supermarket takes pride in providing its customers with the highest quality products at the lowest possible prices throughout Great Britain, from Kirkwall to the Isle of Wight. Social responsibility and sustainability are at the core of the company's daily operations, with the company placing a strong emphasis on its responsibility for people, society and the environment. Lidl GB is passionate about working with British producers and sources two thirds of its products from British suppliers.

4.4 The Schwarz Group (Kaufland, Lidl) has been Europe's largest food retailer since 2014 and generated a turnover of €104.3 billion in financial year 2018.

4.5 For more information about Lidl GB visit <https://corporate.lidl.co.uk/>.

DISCOUNT FORMAT

4.6 The Lidl retail philosophy is centred on simplicity and maximum efficiency at every stage of the business, from supplier to customer, enabling the company to sell high quality own brand products at the lowest prices. It is this format that has resulted in Lidl being classified by retail research company Verdict as a 'deep' or 'hard' discounter.

4.7 The "deep discount" sector includes Lidl and Aldi. This sector also included Netto, which returned to the UK market in 2014. However, in July 2016, the company announced that they will withdraw from the UK market by August 2016. 'Deep discounters' concentrate on selling a limited range of primarily own brand goods at extremely competitive prices. These retailers are therefore distinct from the mainstream convenience retailers such as Tesco, Asda, Sainsbury's and Morrisons in the offer that they provide to shoppers.

4.8 Lidl is able to offer high quality products at low prices due to extensive pan European bulk purchasing. This enables the company to achieve significant economies of scale that can then be passed on to the customer in the form of highly competitive prices. Other factors that enable Lidl to offer consistently low prices include the format of its stores and the approach taken to the display and sale of products.

4.9 The fact that Lidl provides a distinct offer to the main convenience retailers was recognised by the Competition Commission in its 2008 'Grocery Market Investigation'. The Glossary to the investigation report refers to Lidl as 'Limited Assortment Discounter' or 'LAD', which is defined as:

"Limited Assortment Discounters (i.e. grocery retailers offering noticeably lower prices than a conventional supermarket, but which stock a limited range of products)."

4.10 Further reference is made to LAD stores at paragraph 3.3, page 30 of the investigation:

"Limited Assortment Discounters (LADs) carry a limited range of grocery products and base their retail offer on selling these products at very competitive prices. The three major LADs in the UK are Aldi, Lidl and Netto. Each of Aldi, Lidl and Netto carries in the region of 1,000 to 1,500 product lines in stores ranging from 500 to 1,500 sqm (Stores of a similar size operated by a large grocery retailer generally carry around 10,000 - 15,000 products.)"

4.11 Paragraph 4.80, page 70 of the investigation goes on to state that due to the limited number of products carried by LADs they are not close substitutes for other foodstores of a comparable size (i.e. they are different):

"The limited number of products carried by LADs stores means that these stores are not close substitutes for similarly-sized stores operated by CGL (Co-op), M&S, Sainsbury's, Somerfield and Tesco. In particular, we note that Aldi, Lidl and Netto stores typically sell fewer than 1,000 products. In comparison, large grocery retailers generally sell around 5,000 to 10,000 products in stores in the same size range as those operated by LADs (i.e. 500 to 1,400 sqm). The results of our entry analysis also show that Aldi, Lidl and Netto stores are not close substitutes for the stores of large grocery retailers".

4.12 The findings of the Competition Commission's 2008 investigation therefore confirmed that Lidl does provide a different offer to the main food retailers.

4.13 This difference has also been acknowledged by the Secretary of State and Planning Inspectors in a number of appeal decisions relating to Lidl stores. In relation to a Secretary of State decision in the London Borough of Merton (APP/T5720/V/04/1171394), the Planning Inspector in his report concluded that:

"283. The Lidl offer is materially different to that provided by the mainstream food retailers".

4.14 Further to this, it was recognised by an inspector when approving a new store in New Addington, Croydon (APP/L5240/A/07/2052053) that:

"17. The Lidl offer is materially different to that provided by the main food retailers and as a result ... would meet a qualitative need by extending consumer choice. Furthermore, it would add a new dimension to competition within the area".

4.15 The different offer provided by discount foodstores to the likes of Tesco and Sainsbury's is now widely recognised and accepted.

LIMITED PRODUCT RANGE

- 4.16 Aside from the difference in pricing from the main convenience retailers, another characteristic of the Lidl business model, as already highlighted in the Competition Commission's findings above, is that Lidl carry a comparatively limited range of primarily own brand products (around 90% of all products in store).
- 4.17 The majority of Lidl product lines consist of basic convenience goods sourced from Europe, with a few recognised brands sold, in addition to a limited range of fresh fruit and vegetables and also pre-packed meats and frozen food stuffs.
- 4.18 Non-food items are limited to around 15-20% of floorspace in store. The non-food offer is mainly focused on household cleaning and health and beauty products. Lidl stores do receive a twice weekly delivery of non-food 'specials', which can range from garden equipment and small items of furniture to flat screen TVs. These are also sourced on a pan European scale at competitive prices. These items are provided on a 'when it's gone, it's gone' basis and owing to the limited and constantly changing offer, the potential for impact upon other retailers is negligible.

NOT THE 'FULL' RETAIL OFFER

4.19 Lidl stores also differ from other convenience retailers by not offering any of the following products or services:

- Fresh meat counter
- Fresh fish counter
- Delicatessen/cheese counter
- Hot food counter
- Home Delivery/click and collect
- Pharmacy
- Dry-cleaning service
- Post Office services
- Photographic shop
- Mobile phone shop
- Café/restaurant

4.20 Lidl does not offer any of the above products/services because these do not fit with the company's retail concept and business model. Lidl has a successful, proven format that works, and there is no intention to change it. The introduction of any of the above could have an adverse impact on the prices offered to customers.

4.21 As a consequence of the Lidl business model, its customers tend to purchase part of their main grocery shop (i.e. basic staples) in store, taking advantage of the low prices, but then visit other retailers to purchase luxury food or more specialist items. This, combined with the fact that Lidl does not offer the products and services listed above that are found in many of the main convenience retailers as well as smaller local independents, means that its stores complement existing retail provision, while providing additional opportunity and choice for shoppers.

SHORTER TRADING HOURS

4.22 The standard opening hours for Lidl stores are also more limited than the main convenience retailers, as well as smaller independent convenience retailers. Generally, Lidl stores open for a core period of between 08.00–22.00 Monday to Saturday (inclusive of Bank Holidays) and 10.00–16.00 on Sundays.

4.23 The standard opening hours of Lidl stores are therefore relatively limited than other retailers, which is another factor underlining that Lidl do not compete to any significant degree with other retailers, in particular, smaller convenience retailers, many of whom offer different products and services and stay open for much longer periods.

STORE FORMAT

4.24 Lidl has an established store format that is integral to the success of its business model. The minimum store size that is required by Lidl for its operational requirements is circa 2,000 sq. m gross external area (GEA). This equates to a net sales area of approximately 1,200 sq. m. There are a number of reasons why this size of store is required. This is the minimum new store concept store size that is normally required by Lidl (unless there are unusual circumstances).

4.25 A single level store of 2,000 sq. m Gross External Area allows for pallets to be easily moved directly from the delivery bay and placed in the sales area. This cannot be achieved in the same way in smaller stores, resulting in the need to break pallets down and stack more products on shelves, which consequently increases staff costs. This therefore makes it more difficult for Lidl to pass cost savings on to its customers, thereby impacting on its ability to deliver the benefits of discount retailing.

4.26 In addition, the standard store format has been purposefully designed in order to provide mobility impaired customers, the elderly and those with small children, space to move through the store easily. Also, by placing bulky products on the sales floor, Lidl ensure easy access to these items for all customers.

4.27 Alongside the established Lidl store format, Lidl have developed a new smaller store concept in the form of a metropolitan store format. These are fundamentally different to the standard Lidl store format, and is designed for busy urban centre locations, and relying on pedestrian footfall and basket shopping by customers, as opposed to car-borne shoppers.

LOCAL CATCHMENT

4.28 Lidl stores serve a relatively compact catchment area and are intended to provide a local shopping facility. The locational strategy of Lidl is for stores in urban areas, to serve an area that broadly equates to a 0-5 minute drive-time of the site. Owing to its limited offer, people do not tend to travel long distances to shop at Lidl. The catchment has regard to the nature of the settlement and surrounding area, the location of existing food retail provision within the catchment and consumer travel patterns.

4.29 As stated above, many customers use Lidl stores to purchase part of their main grocery shop (i.e. basic staples), often on foot, taking advantage of the low prices, but then visit other retailers to purchase luxury food or more specialist items that are not offered at Lidl (e.g. fresh fish). In addition, many Lidl customers also continue to visit smaller independent convenience stores close to their homes for top-up/basket shopping (i.e. buying a pint of milk or a loaf of bread) as well as to use services that are not provided by Lidl (e.g. dry cleaning, Post Office etc).

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

4.30 The proposed Lidl store will employ up to 40 staff in store across a range of roles. Lidl has a policy of employing local people from all backgrounds to work in their stores. This allows for a short commute to work and for staff to potentially work at short notice. The company is an equal opportunity.

4.31 employer with a strong social inclusion policy. The following extract is taken from Lidl's employee handbook, which sets out the company's equal opportunities stance:

'Lidl is an equal opportunities employer. We wish to ensure that employees are treated, trained and promoted, and job applicants are selected on the basis of their respective skills, talents, performance and experience, without reference to their sex, marital status, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin or disability. Whilst the company strives to realise these principles, it is your responsibility to ensure that they are applied in practice. We will not tolerate any form of harassment and we will seek to ensure that your working environment is free from prejudice. Harassment at work is unlawful.'

4.32 Lidl offer many different career paths and opportunities within the retail sector. These include managerial and administrative positions in addition to positions such as store assistants and cashiers. The company also runs comprehensive management development and training programmes, enhancing skills of staff and maximising staff retention.

4.33 When setting up a new store, Lidl would bring in a manager from another store that ideally has links with the area. This is vital to provide the necessary experience and leadership during the training period of the new store staff. It is then the responsibility of the store manager and district manager to recruit and train the necessary numbers of staff prior to store opening. New staffs are recruited from the local community using a variety of methods, including local newspaper advertisements, Job Centre advertisements and open days.

DELIVERIES

4.34 Lidl products are purchased throughout Europe and then packaged and distributed directly to the relevant Regional Distribution Centre (RDC), of which there are currently 13 in the UK, for onward distribution to its stores across the UK. The nearest RDC to Broadheath is Runcorn.

4.35 Lidl are mindful of the need to minimise any disturbance to neighbouring residents and landowners. To assist in achieving this, each store has only one or two dedicated deliveries per day. This provides all the necessary products for the store, including frozen and chilled goods, which are carried using individual temperature controlled units that can be loaded on to the vehicle. This ensures minimum disruption by removing the need for noisy air conditioning units on the vehicle.

During deliveries, it is company policy that vehicle engines are switched off to reduce noise and disturbance. New stores (such as that proposed) also feature graded ramps in the delivery bay and manual dock levellers, negating the need for noisy scissor or tail lifts. The total unloading time for deliveries is approximately 45 minutes.

SUSTAINABILITY MEASURES

4.36 Lidl implement a variety of measures to minimise the environmental impact of its stores and to contribute toward sustainability objectives, including:

- Limiting deliveries to a maximum of two per day. Delivery vehicles are also used to remove waste from the store on their return journey to the RDC where the waste/recyclable material is sorted and managed centrally. This also helps to reduce vehicle trips and emissions.
- Lidl lead the sector in terms of recycling and waste to landfill reduction by recycling all paper/cardboard and plastic waste produced by the store. This means that over 80% of all waste produced in store is recycled.
- Lidl stores include highly efficient condensing boilers, which recover waste heat from the combustion process. All heating is regulated by sensors.
- Lidl stores use a manual dock leveller for deliveries, reducing noise emissions and energy use.
- All Lidl stores are fitted with a 'Building Management System' incorporating movement sensors, Lux meters and thermostatic controls. This ensures that the back of house areas of the store are only lit when people are using them, that external lighting is only used when required and that the temperatures of the various areas within store are maintained at the correct levels. Energy efficient LED lighting is used and lighting within the sales area is cutback to one third before and after trading hours.
- Water consumption is carefully monitored, and flow control devices and water meters are fitted in all stores.
- Car park lighting is designed in accordance with Lidl's 'Dark Sky' policy with light fittings carefully specified in order to keep light spill beyond the site boundary to a minimum, with Lux and timer controls fitted.

4.37 Lidl produce and implement Travel Plans to promote sustainable transport choices. A Travel Plan has been submitted as part of the application.

4.38 Lidl communicate to staff and customers on a continual basis and encourage all stakeholders to implement environmentally friendly practices where possible.

SECURE BY DESIGN AND THE DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT

4.39 Lidl design their stores and sites to minimise anti-social behaviour and crime. Lidl provide open and well-lit schemes to deter criminal activity. Lidl will, if required, fit CCTV internally and/or externally to ensure the safety of staff, customers and property.

4.40 Lidl provides its customers with disabled car parking spaces that comply with the latest DDA Regulations, ensuring infirm or wheelchair bound customers can manoeuvre as simply as possible. Lidl car parks are designed with the customer in mind to ensure that cars can pass easily into and around the car park. Disabled and parent and child spaces are positioned near the store entrance, in order to provide shorter walking distances from cars to the store.

SUMMARY

4.41 The key trading characteristics that distinguish Lidl from the mainstream convenience retailers and smaller independent retailers are therefore as follows:

1. Restricted number of product lines – Lidl is not a one stop shop and sells a limited range of predominantly own brand goods, with customers visiting other stores for branded or luxury goods.
2. Lidl does not provide the full retail offer –. Lidl sells a limited range of comparison goods which are constantly changing 'non-food specials' which ensures that any impact of other retailers is not constant and is limited. Lidl stores do not offer the full range of services provided by the mainstream food retailers or smaller independent store such as fishmongers and butcher counters.
3. Small store size and localised catchment – Lidl stores do not draw customers from a wide area.
4. Shorter trading hours – Lidl stores do not attempt to compete with mainstream food retailers who operate a number of 24 hour stores or the extended hours of local convenience stores.

4.42 The above factors ensure that the trading impacts of new Lidl stores on existing retailers and centres are very limited.

5.0 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

5.1 This section sets out the planning policy which is considered to be relevant to the consideration of this planning application. We consider national policy contained in the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF) and the accompanying guidance contained in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

5.2 At a local level, the statutory development plan comprises the Revised Trafford Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (2006) and Trafford Core Strategy (January 2012). We have also had regard to the Altrincham Town Centre Neighbourhood Business Plan (2017).

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

5.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development - performing economic, social and environmental roles. The three roles are interdependent and need to be mutually supported.

5.4 Paragraphs 8-11 confirm that at the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The planning system should therefore promote sustainable development solutions.

5.5 We have focussed our consideration of NPPF policy guidance to retail and related policies. However, we also draw attention to the guidance relating to:

- Promoting health and safe Communities (para 91 & 92)
- Promoting sustainable transport (para 102-105, 109-111)
- Making efficient use of land (para 117)
- Achieving well designed places (para 124, 127 & 131)
- Flood Risk (para 163)

5.6 Conserving and enhancing Natural Environment (para 170, 180 & 183)

ECONOMIC GROWTH

5.7 Paragraphs 80-82 state that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. Planning decisions should also recognise the specific locational requirement of different sectors.

TOWN CENTRE USES

- 5.8 Paragraphs 85-90 of the NPPF seek to ensure the vitality of town centres and requires that planning policy should provide a framework to assess proposals for main town centre uses, such as retail, which cannot be accommodated in or adjacent to town centres.
- 5.9 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. That is to say that main town centre uses should be located in town centres, then in edge of centre locations and only if suitable sites are not available (or expected to become available within a reasonable period) should out of centre sites be considered.
- 5.10 Details of how this policy should be applied are contained in the NPPF Planning Practice Guidance 2019, the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) as well as relevant Secretary of State decisions, which are explored in more detail later in this Statement.
- 5.11 The Planning Practice Guidance further states that:

“The application of the test should be proportionate and appropriate for the given proposal” (paragraph 011, reference ID: 2b-011-20190722)

- 5.12 The Planning Practice Guidance also recognises that some main town centre uses have locational requirements, and these form material considerations in the decision making process:

“Use of the sequential test should recognise that certain main town centre uses have particular locational requirements which means that they only be accommodated in specific locations” (Paragraph 012, reference ID: 2b-012-20190722).

- 5.13 With regards to the retail impact test, the PPG confirms:

“The impact test only [our emphasis] applies to proposals exceeding 2,500 square metres gross of floorspace unless a different locally appropriate threshold is set by the local planning authority.”

LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

- 5.14 Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.15 The statutory development plan in this instance comprises the Saved Policies of the Revised Trafford Unitary Development Plan (UDP)(2006) and Trafford Core Strategy (January 2012).

SAVED POLICIES OF THE REVISED TRAFFORD UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN (UDP)(2006)

- 5.16 The Revised Trafford UDP was adopted in June 2006 to provide the framework and priorities for the development, improvement and conservation of land within the Borough of Trafford through to the year 2016. In 2007 and 2008, Trafford Council was granted permission by the Secretary of State to ‘save’ the majority of the Local Plan policies in line with the directions of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 5.17 Following the adoption of the Core Strategy (2012) amendments have also been made to the adopted Proposals Map and these are set out in Appendices 1 and 4 of the adopted Core Strategy. The application site is not allocated or designated for a specific purpose, as shown on the adopted Policies Map.
- 5.18 The site is located in Altrincham Retail Park and therefore occupies an out of centre location with respect to Altrincham Town Centre.
- 5.19 The following UDP policies are considered to be relevant to the proposed development.
- 5.20 **Policy S11 (Development Outside of Established Centres)** states that proposals for retail development not on land within town and district centres (or otherwise specifically allocated for the purpose in this Plan - see Proposal S12) will not be permitted unless all the following factors apply:
- There is a demonstrable need for further retail development locally that cannot be met by existing provision in the Borough;
 - It can be demonstrated that a sequential approach to site selection has been adopted, giving first preference to sites within town and district centres, followed by edge-of-centre sites at town and district centres, sites within local and neighbourhood centres, and only then by out-of-centre sites;
 - The scheme would be highly accessible by a choice of means of transport allowing for the minimisation of car use;
 - The development would not lead to the sporadic siting of comparison goods shopping units along a road corridor; and
 - There is no realistic chance of the site being developed for any other use for which it may be allocated specifically in this Plan.
- 5.21 It should however be noted that due to changes at national policy level, there is no longer a requirement for retail development to demonstrate need through the planning application process.

TRAFFORD CORE STRATEGY (2012)

- 5.22 The Core Strategy was formally adopted on 25th January 2012 and sets out the spatial policy framework meeting identified development requirements and change needed for the Borough up to 2026
- 5.23 **Policy L4 (Sustainable Transport and Accessibility)** relates to sustainable transport and accessibility and seeks to ensure that all new developments do not adversely affect highway safety. In addition, the policy seeks to manage travel demand by improving the choice and quality of transport available.
- 5.24 In accordance with **Policy L5 (Climate Change)**, new development should mitigate and reduce its impact on climate change factors, such as pollution and flooding, and maximise its sustainability through improved environmental performance of buildings, lower carbon emissions and renewable or decentralised energy generation.

- 5.25 Paragraph L.5.3 (CO2 Emissions Reduction) of the Policy states developments involving substantial improvement to an existing building (such as extensions or change of use), will be encouraged to adopt the principles of energy efficiency and incorporate appropriate micro-generation technologies, to help contribute towards reducing CO2 emissions within Trafford.
- 5.26 Furthermore, paragraph L5.13 (Pollution) states that development that has potential to cause adverse pollution (of air, light, water, and ground), noise or vibration will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that adequate mitigation measures can be put in place.
- 5.27 **Policy L7 (Design)** of the Core Strategy requires development to demonstrate high standards of sustainable urban design. In terms of matters of amenity protection, development must not prejudice the amenity of future occupiers of the development and/or occupants of adjacent properties by reason of overbearing, overshadowing, overlooking, visual intrusion, noise or disturbance, odour or in any other way.
- 5.28 **Policy W2 (Town Centres and Retail)** states that in terms development outside of the identified town centres, there will be a presumption against the development of retail, leisure and other town centre-type uses except where it can be demonstrated that they satisfy the tests outlined in current Government Guidance.
- 5.29 Details in regard to Trafford Council car parking standards are set out in Appendix 3 of the Core Strategy. In line with the Council's standards, A1 food retail development will be required to provide 1 car parking space per 16 sq. m; 1 bicycle space per 140 sq. m and 1 motorcycle space per 350 sq. m. In addition, the proposed foodstore will be required to provide 1 space per 350 sq. m for users with mobility impairment.
- 5.30 **Policy L8 (Planning Obligations)** confirms that contributions will be sought for all new development (including mezzanines), redevelopment, and changes of use. The nature and level of contributions will be established on a site by site basis, relating to the type and size of the development proposal.

ALTRINCHAM TOWN CENTRE NEIGHBOURHOOD BUSINESS PLAN (2017)

- 5.31 The Altrincham Town Centre Neighbourhood Business Plan was adopted in November 2017 and forms part of the Development Plan for Trafford.
- 5.32 The appeal site does not fall within the Neighbourhood Plan area, however, the contested sequential site bound by Oakfield Road, Thomas Street and Altrincham Interchange (also commonly referred to as the 'Altair site') falls within the Neighbourhood Plan area/

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS

TRAFFORD COUNCIL PARKING STANDARDS AND DESIGN (2012)

- 5.33 This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was adopted in February 2012 to assist with the interpretation and implementation of Policy L4 (Sustainable Transport and Accessibility) and Policy L7 (Design) contained within the Core Strategy.

EMERGING PLANNING POLICY

GREATER MANCHESTER SPATIAL FRAMEWORK (GMSF)

- 5.34 The GMSF will provide an overarching plan that will cover the whole of the Greater Manchester conurbation and is being prepared jointly by all Greater Manchester local authorities. The GMSF will set out the scale and spatial distribution of new housing, employment land and associated infrastructure across Greater Manchester until 2035. In addition, the Framework will set out strategic development management policies
- 5.35 Formal consultation on a first initial draft of the GMSF ran from October 2016 to January 2017. Progress on the GMSF has stopped as Stockport Council have withdrawn from the GMSF process, and there is no certainty on the timeframes for the document to be progressed further.
- 5.36 On the basis that the plan remains at an early stage of preparation and has a large number of unsolved objections, it is considered that the document carries little weight at this stage.

TRAFFORD NEW LOCAL PLAN

- 5.37 The Council has started to prepare a new Trafford Local Plan. An initial notice of consultation took place in July 2018, with a further round of consultations on the draft plan commenced 4 February 2021 until 18 March 2021. Given the early stage of its preparation, no or very limited weight can be attached to the emerging Local Plan at this time.
- 5.38 Prior to deciding to progress with a new Local Plan, the Council was in the process of preparing the Trafford Local Plan: Land Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD), which, once adopted, was going to be the principal means by which the objectives defined in the Core Strategy were going to be translated onto the ground in Trafford.
- 5.39 The consultation on a draft Land Allocations DPD was carried out between 3rd February 2014 and 17th March 2014 and although the Council decided not to progress with the document, according to the advice provided by the Council's Strategic Policy team, the Consultation Draft Land Allocations (January 2014) still carries a limited weight in the determination of planning applications and its evidence base will be used to inform the new Local Plan.

ALTRINCHAM CORE STRATEGY (SEPTEMBER 2017)

- 5.40 The Altrincham Strategy focused on the Town Centre, seeking to:
- Bring forward development that realises the full potential of Altrincham Town Centre as a key economic driver and the Principal Town Centre in Trafford;
 - improve the quality and diversity of Altrincham's offer supporting an increase in footfall and dwell time within the town centre;
 - promote and enhance the development of Altrincham's visitor economy;
 - widen the scope of activities in the town to make it attractive to all age groups;

- consolidate national operators within a defined town centre core; The Altrincham Strategy July 2014
- place Altrincham Market and the surrounding areas at the heart of plans for the future of the town centre;
- promote an increased town centre residential offer;
- provide increased opportunities for smaller independent town centre businesses and entrepreneurs;
- deliver additional employment activity within the town centre and provide effective linkages between employment areas and other town centre uses;
- link key town centre destinations through high quality public realm, green infrastructure and improved pedestrian and cycle routes;
- improve access by public transport and maximise the benefits of Altrincham Interchange; and
- protect and enhance the historic character of the town centre, especially the Conservation Areas and listed buildings.

5.41 The strategy designates Altrincham into five 'quarters' with potential development opportunities being generally identified. A number of identified opportunities have already been achieved including the new transport interchange and the successful refurbishment of Altrincham Markets.

EVIDENCE BASE

TRAFFORD COUNCIL RETAIL AND LEISURE STUDY (AUGUST 2019)

5.42 The Retail and Leisure Study provides an up to date position of the performance of designated centres in Trafford, including Altrincham Town Centre.

5.43 The Study concludes that Altrincham is a vital and viable centre, with Altrincham Market providing a key anchor. The Study states the Town Centre could benefit from increased comparison goods uses and further diversification of uses within the centre, such as residential uses.

5.44 The redevelopment of the Altair Site and the former House of Fraser sites for mixed use / residential uses in the town centre will contribute positively to the overall offer and environment of the Town Centre.

SUMMARY

5.45 From our review of policy, we concluded as follows:

- Retail is classified as a form of economic development within the NPPF. Policy guidance places a strong emphasis on facilitating sustainable economic growth.

- Retail policy at a national and local level does not presume against retail development outside of designated town centres if the sequential and impact tests are satisfactorily addressed.

5.46 As set out in Section 1 of this Statement, when determining planning application 98127/FUL/19, the Council concluded in the same policy context that the proposals were found to be acceptable in respect of retail impact, drainage and flood risk, landscaping, crime and security, ecology and heritage matters.

6.0 RETAIL CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 This section of the PRS assesses the proposals against the retail tests set out within the national and local planning policy, specifically the sequential and impact tests.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE SEQUENTIAL TEST

6.2 The NPPF requires that the sequential approach to site selection should be applied to all development proposals for main town centre uses that are not in an identified centre and not in accordance with an up to date Development Plan. It is identified that applications for main town centre uses should be located in town centre, then in edge of centre locations, and only if suitable sites are not available should out of centre sites be considered. It further requires applicants and Local Planning Authorities to demonstrate flexibility on issues such as format and scale.

6.3 Subsequently, a sequential site assessment has been undertaken which illustrates that the proposed development fully complies with all national and local level policy guidance in this regard

Methodology

6.4 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) 'Ensuring the vitality of town centres' provides guidance on the application and interpretation of the sequential test. This includes the importance for scoping the remit of the sequential (and impact) assessment, for agreement between the applicant and Local Planning Authority.

6.5 The NPPG further identifies those considerations (ref: ID 2b-011-20190722) that should be taken into account when determining whether a proposal complies with the sequential test, based on the following:

- Has the suitability of more central sites to accommodate the proposals been considered, having regard to flexibility?
- Is there scope for flexibility in the format and/or scale of the proposal?
- If there are no suitable sequentially preferable locations, the sequential test is passed.

6.6 Typically, any centre located within the catchment area of a proposed store should be assessed for sequentially preferable sites. As set out within this statement, Lidl stores serve a relatively compact catchment area that provides a local shopping facility. The Lidl locational strategy is based on stores in urban areas that serve an area that normally broadly equates up to a 5 minute drive-time of the site. However, through previous discussions with Trafford Borough Council in regard to the Lidl store at Chester Road, Stretford (planning permission ref. 92714/FUL/17), a 'primary catchment area' of 5 minutes was adopted and then a further 'secondary catchment area' encompassing a 7 minute drive-time. In light of these previous discussions, a similar approach has been adopted here

6.7 Drawing on this approach, the Joint Applicants have undertaken a sequential site assessment appropriate to the proposal's catchment area. The only centre identified within the catchment is Altrincham Town Centre. This position is accepted by the Council.

Sequential Parameters

- 6.8 The application of the sequential approach to site selection, including the consideration of sites that may be considered suitable and available, must also fully understand, and have regard to the occupier's operational and commercial requirements.
- 6.9 At the operational level, the Lidl business model is driven by the following requirements when determining whether a site(s) or premise(s), are suitable or viable: These relate to:
- i. A site that can accommodate a store in excess of 1,800 sq. m to allow for provision of enhanced consumer choice based on a full product range offer.
 - ii. A site that can allow for the safe manoeuvring of customer vehicles and delivery vehicles on site.
 - iii. A prominent site with the ability to attract passing trade.
 - iv. A site that is easily accessible by a choice of means of transport.
 - v. A site that is able to offer benefits to its customers, including adjacent surface level car parking, so that customers can easily transfer goods to their vehicles.
 - vi. Provision of a dedicated service area to the rear of the store, including the ability to accommodate HGV's.
 - vii. A single storey, open and unrestricted sales floor area which benefits from a level/flat topography, or which has the ability to be developed as such.
- 6.10 It has been accepted by the Secretary of State and Planning Inspectors that a single level retail operation is essential to the Lidl business model, and that consequently disaggregation cannot be achieved without the benefits of the discount format being lost. Furthermore, the size of a proposed store and accordingly its site area is predicated on the ability for a store to provide its full range of products which provide enhanced consumer choice and provision in terms of goods and price.
- 6.11 As well as the proposed store in Unit 1A (for occupation by Lidl), the application will also result in a smaller Unit 1 (for occupation by Homebase). This is an essential component of the application and therefore should be included alongside the new floorspace for Lidl as part of the consideration of the sequential test. The re-use of part of the Homebase store also means that the net increase in GIA will only be 454 sq. m, as opposed to 1,858 sq. m, which would be required for a standalone new store. As such, the minimum site area should be the size of the application site area, 1.81ha, being a site large enough to accommodate both stores, including the garden centre, as well as the necessary parking, servicing and access arrangements.
- 6.12 Notwithstanding this and to be robust, the assessment is based on the site area required by Lidl only. Drawing on Lidl's proven business model requirements, it is considered a minimum site area of 0.6 ha is required, and this size threshold has duly been adopted for the purposes of this retail assessment. The focus of the sequential search is at, Altrincham Town Centre, being the only Town Centre falling within the secondary catchment area as identified by the 7 minute drive time isochrones.

ALTRINCHAM TOWN CENTRE – THE ALTAIR SITE

- 6.13 Planning application 98127/FUL/19 was supported by a full sequential assessment which was undertaken on a basis agreed with the Council focussing on Altrincham Town Centre. The Council and its external retail advisors, Nexus, concluded that there was only one potential site which merited consideration from a sequential testing perspective – the 'Altair Site', bounded by Oakfield Road, Thomas Street and Altrincham Interchange.
- 6.14 The characteristics, development timeline and the occupation of the Altair Site have been considered in detail in the determination of the Previous Application. The applicants remain firmly of the opinion that the site is neither suitable nor available for the proposed development for the reasons expanded upon below.

ALTAIR SITE

- 6.15 Before considering the Altair site in relation to the current application, we would highlight that in June 2019, the site was discounted by the Council as not being sequentially preferable in relation to an application by ALDI for a new store at Atlantic Street, Broadheath (Planning Permission Ref. 96088/FUL/18). In making a decision on that application, Trafford Council concluded that the Altair site was neither suitable nor available for a discount foodstore with surface level car parking. In our opinion, there have been no changes in material circumstances since the Council reached this conclusion and granted planning permission for a discount foodstore. Therefore, acting consistently, it must be reasonable for one to assume that the Council would reach the same conclusion in relation to the current application proposals.
- 6.16 Notwithstanding, we have revisited the sequential test considerations in relation to the Altair site and set out our conclusions below.
- 6.17 The Altair site is not allocated for a foodstore in the Development Plan, nor does it benefit from any form of food retail planning consent. The proposed Altair development comprises a residential-led, multi-level, mixed use scheme. Nikal Developments are the proposed developers of the site.
- 6.18 It is agreed that the site is not capable of accommodating the 'development proposed by the applicant' (i.e. the full extent of the planning application). The Council do not accept this position on the basis of the following 3 points:
- The Council consider that the component parts of the planning application (i.e. Homebase and Lidl) should be disaggregated
 - The Council consider that because Lidl have signed a contract to deliver a different type of retail store as part of the Altair scheme, the site is suitable for the application proposals.
 - The site's availability (particularly the potential programme for the delivery of development) is a realistic timeframe.

DISAGGREGATION

- 6.19 It is self-evident that the two retail units proposed (Unit 1 for Homebase and Unit 1a for occupation by Lidl) is delivered through the reconfiguration of the existing unit. In other words, it is only because of the proposals as a whole that the units are created.
- 6.20 A starting point for the consideration of the proposals was Homebase's requirement to "right size" its operations. A smaller format store is now required to meet their needs. The existing Homebase store cannot continue to viably trade in its current form. As previously advised by Homebase (see enclosed dated 29 June 2020 at **Appendix 2**) a downsized store at Altrincham Retail Park based around its existing

operations is required to ensure Homebase’s continued operation in Altrincham, and to protect the 50 people they employ in the town. Therefore, since 2018, Homebase has been working with the landlord to downsize its existing store with a view to reducing their cost base so that their existing store can continue trading where they otherwise may have to close.

6.21 Without the reconfiguration and downsize proposed by this application, Homebase would be forced to close the store and vacate the unit permanently. The only way to retain Homebase in a sustainable trading format –including retaining the existing local staff working at the store - is for the re-configuration to take place. The Lidl store coming forward facilitates this reconfiguration.

6.22 It is clear that the proposed development must be treated together, and that disaggregation is not required by local or national policy and as interpreted by relevant case law.

SUITABILITY OF SITE FOR A LIDL STORE OF THE TYPE PROPOSED BY THE APPLICATION

6.23 Notwithstanding Lidl’s commitment to the Altair site, it is fundamental to the consideration of the sequential test to understand the different trading formats and characteristics and the wider context for Lidl’s store representation in the wider Altrincham area.

6.24 There are fundamental differences between the type of development which will come forward at Altair (akin to a “metropolitan” format store such as Lidl’s existing Manchester Piccadilly store), when compared to the limited assortment discount foodstore being proposed at Altrincham Retail Park (a “standard” format store). These business models are not interchangeable. The key differences between the Lidl store at Altrincham Retail Park and the store which will likely come forward at Altair (including the Lidl store) are summarised below:

Table 2: Store Format Differences

Development Characteristics	Altrincham Retail Park	Altair Site
Net Sales Area above 1,200sqm	Yes	No
Surface Level Car Park	Yes	No
Single Storey Development	Yes	No
Mainly Car Borne Shoppers	Yes	No
Shoppers mainly using trolleys	Yes	No
Main store access from Car Park	Yes	No

6.25 To reinforce the point, Lidl have prepared a letter, which confirms the following (see **Appendix 3**):

- That Lidl are fully committed to delivering two stores in Altrincham;
- That Lidl have a contract in place with Nikal Developments, who control the Altair site;

- The timings for the delivery of the Altair scheme; and
- The operational differences between the appeal scheme and the store that would be delivered as part of the Altair development.

6.26 In addition to the physical differences between the two schemes summarised in Table 2 above, the sales area at the Altair scheme will be 15% smaller than the Lidl store proposed by this application. The Altair scheme will also have 40m less vertical shelving than the Altrincham Retail Park store, equivalent to one whole aisle. Operationally, this limits the range of goods which can be sold from the store, when compared to a standard format Lidl store as proposed by this application

6.27 The difference in store formats also goes to the way the stores are shopped. Based upon regional examples, Lidl have confirmed that a customer will spend approximately 70% less when visiting a metropolitan format store (i.e. the format proposed for Altair), reflecting the basket shopping nature of the stores. On this basis, it is confirmed that the Altair scheme will have 70% self-serve checkouts, which specifically cater to basket shopping. In contrast, the proposed store the subject of this application will have no self-serve checkout provision and will cater principally for trolley borne shopping.

6.28 It is clear that the Lidl store which will be delivered at Altair is a very different type of development to the Lidl store proposed by this planning application. Therefore, even if one were to adopt the Council's position and disaggregate the scheme proposed by the application and separate out the Lidl store, the Altair site would not be suitable for the type of development proposed.

THE AVAILABILITY OF THE ALTAIR SITE

6.29 It is agreed by all parties that the Altair site is not immediately available for the type of development proposed. Notwithstanding, when deciding to refuse planning application 98127/FUL/19 the Council determined that a 3 to 4 year timeframe for the delivering the Altair site was "reasonable".

6.30 At the fundamental level, it is not available for the proposed development full stop in that terms have already been agreed between Lidl and Nikal Developments for the provision of a "metropolitan" format discount foodstore - a different type of development.

6.31 Notwithstanding, the ability for the site to become available is also dependent upon the following

- The preparation of a planning application
- The submission and determination of the planning application
- The discharge of relevant pre-commencement planning conditions
- The tendering process to appoint contractors for the overarching Altair scheme; and
- Construction of the scheme on a phased basis to achieve a shell specification suitable for occupation

- 6.32 In our opinion, a best case timeframe for the above would be at least 3 to 4 years to the point when a unit may be available for occupation. Even on this potentially optimistic timeline, this is beyond what a reasonable reader could construe as available now or within a reasonable period as set out in the NPPF.
- 6.33 It should be noted that the Altair scheme has been coming forward for over 10 years, with the first planning consent being obtained in 2009. This demonstrates the complexity of the development site and it is clear that the site is not immediately available and will not be available for a number of years. The availability of the Altair site is further questioned by the recent decision by Trafford Council to withdraw its interest to occupy part of the wider development site.
- 6.34 In the NPPF when referencing availability, is written in the present tense. This is a change from the historic guidance on availability, which was acknowledged in the Tollgate decision. Therefore, when considering whether a sequential site is available, it is appropriate to ask whether a sequentially preferable site is available to accommodate the application proposals within a similar timeframe.
- 6.35 The application site at Altrincham Retail Park is immediately available and Lidl would be open and trading within 12 months from the grant of planning permission. To further underline these timescales, the applicants have confirmed they would be willing to accept a 12 month time limit for the implementation of any permission.

SEQUENTIAL TEST CONCLUSIONS

- 6.38 The applicants consider that even if the Lidl element is disaggregated from the proposed development as a whole, the Altair site cannot be considered either suitable or available for the type of development proposed. Therefore, the sequential test has been satisfied.
- 6.39 The refusal for the proposed development at Altrincham Retail Park on sequential grounds will not speed up the redevelopment of the Altair Site, which is subject to a separate contract and development timeline.
- 6.40 It cannot be the purpose of the sequential test to stifle and limit development in the case where the same occupier has legally committed to trade from both locations; the application site and the Altair Site. Delaying the proposals at Altrincham Retail Park until works on the Altair Site have commenced will result in delay and significant loss of local employment opportunities and investment into the local economy which can otherwise be delivered within a very short timeframe. This is particularly pertinent given that the Council have accepted that the proposed development at Altrincham Retail Park will not impact on the timescales associated with the delivery of the Altair Site.
- 6.41 In the absence of any suitable town centre sites and taking into consideration the commitment from Lidl to occupy both sites, the application site is considered to be an appropriate location for the use proposed by this application. As such, we conclude that the sequential test has been satisfied accordingly.

RETAIL IMPACT CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.42 Paragraph 89 of the NPPF relates to the potential impact of proposed developments. It requires that a retail impact assessment should be undertaken for town centre uses above 2,500sqm that are outside of town centre locations, unless a lower locally set threshold is in place.
- 6.43 The proposal consists of a new Use Class E(a) discount foodstore of 1,858sqm GIA and a retail warehouse unit of 3,612sqm. The net additional GIA retail floorspace at the site, taking into account the reduction in the size of the Homebase store, is only 454sqm.

- 6.44 The proposal is therefore comfortably below that threshold where a quantitative retail assessment is required. Notwithstanding, the previous application was supported by a full retail impact assessment.
- 6.45 In considering the Previous Application, the Committee Report concludes that the development will not impact on the trading position of existing convenience operators within Altrincham Town Centre, and will not therefore undermine the vitality and viability of the Town Centre as a whole.
- 6.46 The retail impact assessment submitted in support of the Previous Application was reviewed by the Council's external retail advisors, and while there were some differences over the adopted methodology, an impact of circa 4% was identified on the convenience offer within Altrincham Town Centre, which was not considered to be significant.
- 6.47 The Committee Report concludes that the proposal will not have an impact on the delivery of the Altair Site, and that the developers of the site (Nikal) have not objected to the development proposals at Altrincham Retail Park.
- 6.48 The Previous Application was considered acceptable from a retail impact perspective and specifically that the proposals would not result in a "significant adverse impact" on any town centres when having regard to the two strands of the impact test as set out in national policy. Therefore,
- 6.49 In our opinion, there have been no material change in circumstances which would result in a different conclusion in relation to retail impact.

SUMMARY

- 6.50 There are no sequentially preferable sites which can accommodate the development proposals. The Altair Site is to be occupied by Lidl as a metropolitan concept store. Lidl have confirmed that they will operate two stores in Altrincham, with the store at Altrincham Retail Park providing a complementary function to the retailer's in-centre metropolitan concept business model. The requirements of the sequential test have therefore been satisfied accordingly.
- 6.51 Altrincham Town Centre is a highly vital and viable centre. The proposed development will not result in a significant adverse impact on the convenience element of the Town Centre, or the Town Centre as a whole. This position is accepted by the Council in the consideration of the Previous Application. It is also accepted by the Council that the proposal will not impact on the delivery of public or private investment, including the Altair Site.

7.0 DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 This section of the report sets out the relevant development management considerations associated with the proposed development, with references to the Committee Report of planning application ref. 98127/FUL/19 (the 'Committee Report') where appropriate.

DESIGN AND HERITAGE CONSIDERATIONS

7.2 The planning application is supported by a Design and Access Statement, prepared by The Harris Partnership, and a Heritage Statement, prepared by Stephen Levrant Heritage Architecture.

7.3 The proposals comprise a modern extension and refurbishment of an existing retail warehouse unit. The proposals comprise a high quality development, with additional new glazing, including new shopfront glazing for the prominent corner of the new Unit 1A.

7.4 The submitted Heritage Statement concludes that the proposal will not affect the setting of the Grade II Railway Inn Public House or the former Lloyds and Post Office building. Whilst the Committee Report identifies a moderate impact on heritage assets, paragraph 75 of the Committee Report concludes that:

"Accordingly, it is concluded that the policy test at paragraph 196 of the NPPF has been fulfilled and that the heritage harm would be outweighed"

7.5 With respect to the design of the proposed development, the committee report for application 98127/19 concludes at paragraph 83 that:

"when taken as a whole, it is considered that the proposal constitutes a reasonable design response which has some positive elements of character and which generally satisfies the requirements of Policy L7, the NPPF and the National Design Guide."

LANDSCAPING

7.6 A Proposed Landscape Plan is submitted with the planning application, prepared by Vector Landscape Designers.

7.7 The proposed Landscape Plan shows landscaping and trees along the Manchester Road and George Richards Way site boundaries, including compensatory tree planting replacing existing trees on a like for like basis.

7.8 The Committee Report confirms that the proposals are acceptable from a landscape perspective subject to appropriate conditions.

FLOOD RISK AND DRAINAGE

- 7.9 The application is supported by a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and an Outline Drainage Strategy, prepared by LKK Group. The site is located within Flood Zone 1, with very low risk of fluvial flooding.
- 7.10 The Committee Report concludes that the LLFA are satisfied with the approach set out within the drainage proposals set out in the Previous Application.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS

- 7.11 The proposed development will provide some 40 new employment opportunities within the new Lidl store, as well as secure the long term future of the existing 50 jobs within the Homebase store. The proposed development will therefore have significant socio-economic benefits which should be afforded significant material weight in the determination of the planning application.
- 7.12 As set out within Section 4 of the report, Lidl provide a number of career development opportunities for staff within the retail sector. A range of positions will be available at the store, with staff provided opportunities to develop a wide range of skills and develop within the business. Lidl provide a Development Catalogue allowing staff to focus on improvement of specific skills to further career development.
- 7.13 Talent Management reviews are undertaken annually to allow staff to follow a specific development pathway to target the next career move and skill development. Lidl also offer a range of apprenticeships in different roles across the business, as well providing externally-recognised qualifications.
- 7.14 The majority of staff within the new store will be recruited locally with local newspaper advertisements, engagement with the local Job Centre as well as open days. Lidl is a fair wage employee, having adopted the real Living Wage Foundation rates of pay.
- 7.15 The proposed development will therefore deliver material employment benefits by way of the additional employment opportunities within the Lidl store, as well as securing the existing 50 jobs within the downsized Homebase store.
- 7.16 The delay of the proposal at Altrincham Retail Park coming forward until the commencement of the Altair Site redevelopment will therefore preclude from the additional employment within the proposed Lidl store from coming forward, as well as jeopardise the existing jobs within the Homebase store.
- 7.17 The proposed development will also result in investment into the local economy by way of the construction works associated with the external alterations, sub-division and building works associated with the proposal.

RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

- 7.18 The planning application is supported by a Noise Impact Assessment, prepared by REC, and assesses the impact of the proposal on nearby sensitive receptors. A background noise sound survey was undertaken during a weekday and weekend to set out the existing background noise position.
- 7.19 The proposals include the provision of an acoustic barrier to limit the impact of the proposal on residential amenity. A Servicing Management Plan and a Construction Environmental Management Plan will be provided by way of a condition.

7.20 The Committee Report sets out the opening hours as follows:

- 8am-10pm Monday to Saturday (including Bank Holidays)
- 10am – 4pm on Sundays

7.21 The servicing hours are as follows:

- 8am-10pm Monday to Saturday
- 10am – 4pm on Sundays

8.0 HIGHWAYS CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 A Transport Assessment (TA), prepared by SCP Consulting, and Travel Plan (TP), prepared by TTP Consulting, have been submitted in support of this application. The Transport Assessment fully appraises the existing transportation position, the likely impact of the proposed development and addresses the reason for refusal of the previous application.
- 8.2 The TA assesses the impacts of the proposal in terms of traffic generation and impact on the local highway network and confirms that the proposed additional of a Lidl foodstore to the retail park will not result in any operational issues at any of the signalised junctions assessed in the vicinity of the site. In addition, the introduction of the new egress onto George Richards Way will reduce queuing out of the retail park, improving internal circulation, and improve the efficiency of the internal mini-roundabout.
- 8.3 Paragraph 53 of the Committee Report confirms that the proposal will not have a significant impact on the local highway network, and that there will be no material change in traffic conditions.
- 8.4 The Committee Report further confirms that the level of car parking at the Site is acceptable, and that subject to provision of appropriate cycle parking arrangements, there are no concerns regarding to the provision of vehicle and cycle parking at the Site.
- 8.5 The proposals comprise a reduction in the overall number of parking spaces from 790 to 694, a reduction of 96 spaces overall. In summary, there will be 4 additional spaces allocated for disabled users, additional 10 spaces for families with children, and 110 fewer standards spaces. There will be an increase in cycle provision, with a total of 12 Sheffield stands, providing a total of 24 cycle parking spaces.
- 8.6 A revised layout, incorporating an updated egress on George Richards Way forms the basis of this application. Notwithstanding the changes to the egress onto George Richards Way shown within this application, it is considered that the layout associated with application 98127/FUL/19 is acceptable from a highways safety perspective.
- 8.7 Following the refusal of the previous application, further consultation has taken place between SCP, the applicant's highways consultant, and the Local Highway Authority (LHA) and Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM). The revised layout has been therefore been developed in close consultation with the Local Highway Authority.
- 8.8 These discussions are set out in detail within the submitted TA, and summarised below.
- 8.9 As part of the discussion with the LHA and TfGM, the following additional elements have been progressed to demonstrate that the proposed development is acceptable from a highways safety perspective.

Video Surveys

- 8.10 Video surveys were undertaken in August 2020 to observe vehicle movements at the junction providing access into the Retail Park and the location of the proposed egress from the site onto George Richards Way. The video surveys observed that approximately 14% of vehicles travelling eastbound along George Richards Way changed lanes from the off-side to near-side lane. This is not considered to be indicative

of significant lane-changing behaviour given the urban location of the site. The TA concludes that the identified video surveys confirm that an egress in the identified location from the site on to George Richards Way will not have any cause for concern in terms of highways safety.

Microsimulation Modelling

- 8.11 Additional modelling has been presented to the LHA demonstrating that there is more than adequate gaps within eastbound traffic flow to allow vehicles to leave the application site using the new egress on George Richards Way.

Collision Data

- 8.12 The collision data identifies 4 collisions in the vicinity of the site along George Richards Way and its junction with the Retail Park and Manchester Road in the period between January 2015 and December 2019. Given the existing traffic flows, this is not considered to be an excessive number over the five year period. There are no collisions recorded within the vicinity of the new egress. It is therefore concluded that the proposed development would not result in any significant safety implications on the highways network.

Tracking Information

- 8.13 Swept path analysis of different range of vehicles has been undertaken and is included within the TA. The swept paths demonstrate that the revised egress issue does not raise any concerns with regard to vehicular movement through the site and the new egress.

Summary

- 8.14 Additional evidence and information relating to the new egress has been provided to address the reason for refusal of the previous application. The revised egress arrangements have been prepared following detailed and extensive discussions with the LHA and TfGM, with significant additional evidence provided to demonstrate that the proposals represent an acceptable technical solution. Notwithstanding the submission of the revised layout as part of this application, it is considered that the layout and egress options considered as part of application 98217/FUL/19 are also acceptable.

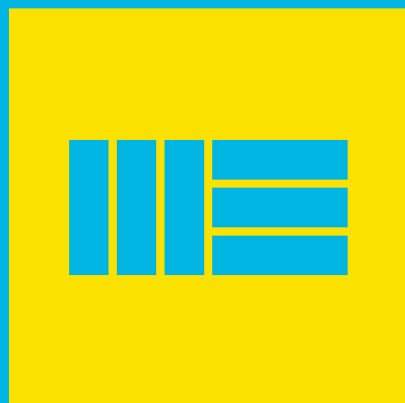
9.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 This application follows the Council's decision to refuse planning permission in July 2020 for comparable development (*'extension, refurbishment and subdivision existing Homebase store to provide a downsized unit for Homebase and a new Class A1 retail unit. The application also proposes the relocation of the Homebase garden centre, the reconfiguration of the existing car park and associated landscaping, and the creation of a new egress'*). The reasons for refusing that permission revolve around the Council's view that insufficient information was provided within the application to demonstrate compliance with the sequential test, and in relation to one particular site (the Altair site) only, and the limited evidence provided in support of the new vehicle egress from the car park onto George Richards Way to demonstrate that the new egress will not have an impact on the safety of the local road network. All other matters relating to the proposals, including design, landscaping, retail impact, drainage and floor risk, heritage impacts, residential amenity, air quality and all other relevant development management matters were considered acceptable.
- 9.2 This application proposes identical development save for changes to, inter alia, access arrangements and associated works, and the application submission focuses on the two reasons for refusal set out within the Council's decision notice Ref. 98127/FUL/19.
- 9.3 Additional information has been provided in relation to the sequential test as part of this submission. The proposed occupier's commitment to dual trade and to operate at both the Altair Site, and the application site, has been confirmed. Lidl have confirmed that the Altair Site will trade as a metropolitan format store, focused on predominantly top-up basket shopping, consistent with the operator's other metropolitan stores in town and city centre locations. In contrast, Lidl will trade an out of centre / retail park format from Unit 1A, focusing on main-food trolley shopping, complementing the committed metropolitan format offer at the Altair Site. The timescales associated with the delivery of the Altair Site are not impacted by the proposals for Unit 1A.
- 9.4 On this basis, given the operator's clear and contractual commitment to operate from both locations, the Altair Site cannot therefore be considered genuinely available, or available within a reasonable timeframe. Neither can the Altair Site be considered suitable, given the different store format that is to be delivered at the site.
- 9.5 The proposed development therefore satisfied the requirements of the sequential test.
- 9.6 A revised layout is submitted with the application, providing an alternative design solution to the proposed egress on to George Richards Way. The layout has been prepared in close consultation with the Local Highway Authority and Transport for Greater Manchester. As part of these discussions, additional supporting evidence and surveys have been undertaken, including video surveys and further modelling to demonstrate the acceptability of the proposed layout and egress arrangements.
- 9.7 The proposed layout alteration and revision to the design of the egress on to George Richards Way has addressed the perceived highways concerns associated with the proposals set out within the Previous Application.
- 9.8 Notwithstanding the above, it is the applicant's position that the layout and egress considered as part of the Previous Application remains an acceptable design solution that does not raise any concerns from a highways safety perspective.

- 9.9 The proposed development will deliver material socio-economic benefits, contributing positively and significantly to the local economic wellbeing. This should be afforded material weight in the determination of the planning application. The proposed development will deliver approximately 40 new employment opportunities within the proposed Lidl store. The proposal will also allow Homebase to downsize from their existing oversized accommodation to a more appropriate floor area, and maintain a viable retail operation, securing the long term future of the existing 50 jobs within the Homebase store.
- 9.10 The proposed development has significant planning merit, is acceptable from a principle perspective, does not raise any concerns from a development management perspective, will contribute significantly and positively to the local economic wellbeing, and should therefore be granted planning permission accordingly.

MONTAGU EVANS

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WE CONSIDER OUR CREDENTIALS, HOW WE HAVE STRUCTURED OUR BID AND OUR PROPOSED CHARGING RATES TO BE COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE INFORMATION.
WE REQUEST THAT THESE BE TREATED AS CONFIDENTIAL.