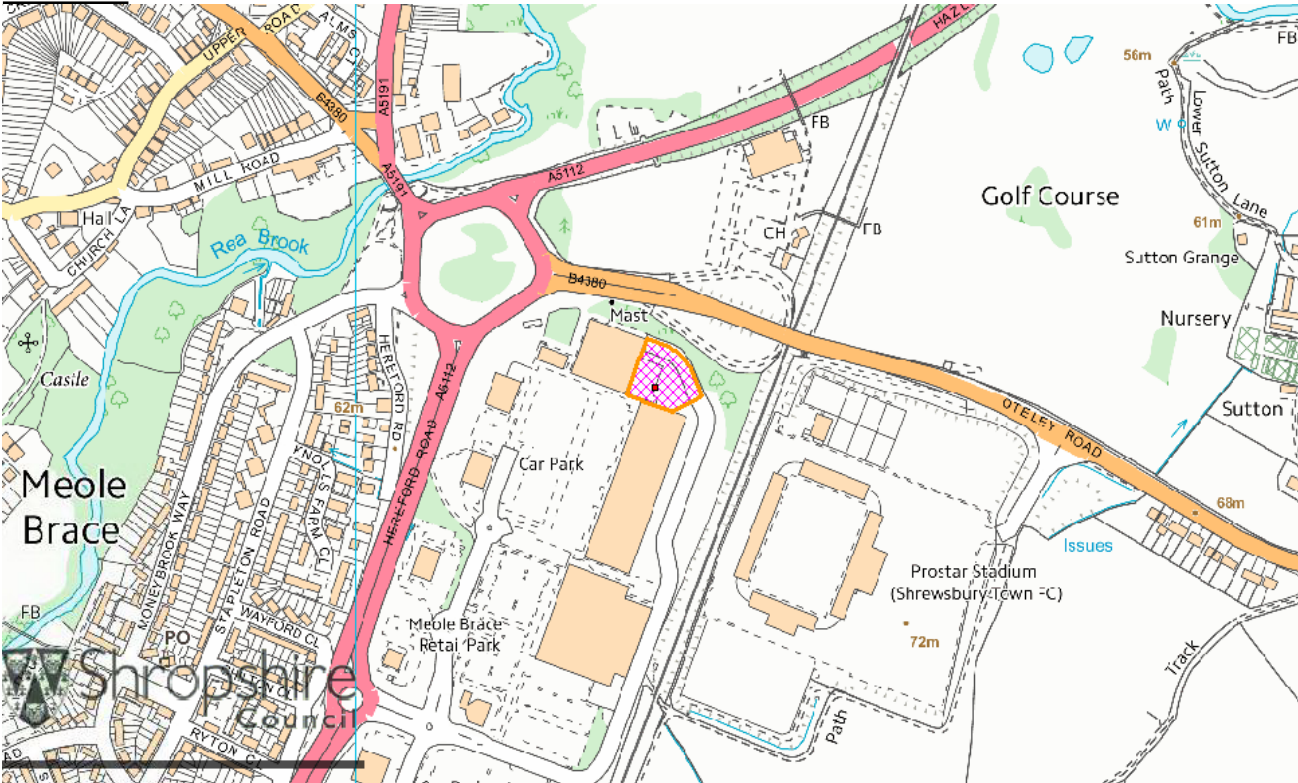


Development Management Report

Responsible Officer: Tim Rogers

Email: tim.rogers@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 258773 Fax: 01743 252619

Summary of Application

<u>Application Number:</u> 17/00405/FUL	<u>Parish:</u>	Shrewsbury Town Council
<u>Proposal:</u> Removal of existing structures and construction of an A1 (retail) unit; all associated works including car park alterations, access, servicing and landscaping		
<u>Site Address:</u> Proposed Retail Unit East Of Unit 8 Meole Brace Retail Park Shrewsbury Shropshire		
<u>Applicant:</u> Coal Pension Properties Ltd		
<u>Case Officer:</u> Tim Rogers/Karen Townend		<u>email:</u> planningdmc@shropshire.gov.uk
<u>Grid Ref:</u> 349294 – 310522		
		

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

1. The Central Planning Committee deferred a decision on this planning application at its 21st December 2017 meeting (Appendix 1 to this report). It asked for the following four matters to be considered further :
 - The estimated additional vehicle movements;
 - The timing of the traffic survey;
 - Access for emergency vehicles; and
 - The implementation of improvement works within the retail park approved under separate planning application.
2. The applicants have submitted two statements covering each of the four issues. This report the responses received on these four matters, provides an officer view and updates the Committee on any other matters raised in connection with this application since its 21st December 2017 meeting.

The estimated additional vehicle movements

3. Applicants comments

The calculation of the additional traffic that is likely to be generated by the proposals is covered in Section 5 of the Transport Statement that accompanied the planning application.

The traffic impact of the proposals has been agreed as being acceptable by highways officers at Shropshire Council.

It is universally recognised within established best practice that with any extension of existing retail facilities, an increase in floor area will not result in a pro-rata increase in traffic flows. There is an extensive body of evidence for retail developments that the proportional increase in customers as a result of an extension is significantly less than the proportional increase in the size of the development. Recent surveys at Retail Parks demonstrated that increases in floor space resulted in a 12% to 13% pro-rata increase in traffic flows. This issue is covered in detail within Section 5 of the Transport Statement. Given the reasonably small size of the new unit the traffic generation is likely to be much lower than that considered within the Transport Statement. It is highly likely the unit will not be a destination in its own right and the vast majority of the customers will already be visiting the Retail Park and simply extend their stay a little longer to shop at the new unit.

As such, the currently estimated peak hour traffic generation of 32 additional trips during the Weekday evening peak hour and 42 more two-way trips during the Saturday afternoon peak hour is a robust analysis of traffic impact in this case.

Given the very low increases in traffic, no mitigation is required. Nevertheless, the applicant is aware of issues within the park and is proposing works to improve vehicle flow which in turn have benefits to the operation of the local highway network. These measures include works within the car park and the creation of a new exit lane at the Hereford Road roundabout (application ref 17/00369/FUL).

4. Officer comments

With regard to the new proposed building the TS contends that an increase in floor-space within a retail park will not result in a pro-rata increase in traffic flows. The highway authority would agree with this assertion although it is likely that the end user will ultimately influence increase new customers visiting the retail park and as a consequence increased customer traffic flows. It is understood that the new building would be limited to Sports Direct as the new end user and any subsequent occupiers would be limited to the sales of bulky or white goods. On the basis that Sports Direct are already present on the retail park, it would be very difficult to argue that this development would increase customer and subsequent traffic flows. It is more likely that the new store would improve the customer shopping experience and perhaps dwell time. In relation to dwell time however, there is no suggestion that parking capacity within the retail park is a problem.

The presence of Sports Direct within the existing building would mean the re-occupation of that building, should the application be approved and built. There is less control therefore of the occupation of the current building than is being imposed upon the new building. Again though it would be difficult to argue that the cumulative impact would be material, and more importantly severe enough, to warrant a highway objection that would be defensible.

The timing of the traffic survey

5. Applicants comments

Traffic surveys were carried out at the Retail Park on Friday 8th and Saturday 9th July 2017. These dates were accepted by highways officers at Shropshire Council as providing an appropriate basis upon which to assess the potential impact of the proposed development.

The dates did not clash with a Shrewsbury Town Football Club home match, which might have skewed the results, and the period was not within any local school holidays. Furthermore, as an operator of numerous similar Retail Parks, the applicant was satisfied that the levels of traffic at the Retail Park in July represented a typical profile of traffic movements into and out of the site.

The timing of the traffic surveys is justified and entirely appropriate.

6. Officer comments

Members raised a question as to the timing of the traffic surveys in order to inform the technical submission of the application. As has been confirmed by applicant's agent, the surveys were carried out Friday 8th and Saturday 9th July 2017. The highway authority have no issue with the timing of these surveys.

Access for emergency vehicles

7. Applicants comments

This issue was not raised as a concern during the application process by professional officers at Shropshire Council. Furthermore, this issue has never been raised by officers

during any of the planning applications at the Retail Park over the past few years which Croft have been involved in.

There is nothing to suggest that the site has any potential safety or emergency access issues at present. The proposed highway improvements at the Hereford Road site access will improve peak period congestion and allow additional road space which will provide further capacity should it be required for emergency vehicle access.

Furthermore, the Retail Park has been designed to ensure there are alternative routes to all units. This is provided by either the main access road to the west of the main car parking areas and also the access road that runs adjacent to the main terrace of retail units to the east of the Retail Park as well as the Sainsbury's store.

These routes circulate to the first internal roundabout and between here and Hereford Road is a dual carriageway section of road to again ensure that if an incident or congestion takes place on this section that the other side of the carriageway could be used in an emergency situation.

In summary, there should be no safety objection to the proposals.

8. Officer comments

Members raised concerns regarding emergency access at the December meeting. The applicant's TS has responded that this matter has never been raised as an issue to consider and address. The highway authority consider that the lack of an alternative emergency access or egress serving Sainsbury's and retail park is a deficiency in the retail park. However the highway authority is not aware that the lack of an emergency access has given rise to any issues of access/egress by emergency vehicles. Furthermore given the comments made above in relation to increased vehicle movements it is considered that the lack of an emergency access is not in itself a substantive reason to justify refusal of the current proposal or the provision of an alternative means of emergency access. The applicants and their agents have been made aware of the Committee's comments and concerns.

The implementation of improvement works within the retail park approved under a separate planning application

9. Applicants comments

The applicant is aware of vehicle flow concerns at the retail park. In the interests of good site management, a package of works is proposed which includes a number of measures linked to the current application (including works to remove unnecessary speed humps and create additional lanes within the retail park).

Planning permission is in place for an additional retail park exit lane at the Hereford Road roundabout (permission 17/00369/FUL). The additional exit lane is not, however, necessary to make the current application acceptable in planning terms. Nevertheless, the additional exit capacity will enable the easier movement of vehicles from the park, in turn improving vehicle flow within the park and reducing current concerns.

The applicant is working on the detailed design for the exit lane, which is a necessary pre-cursor to discharging pre-commencement planning conditions. As part of this detailed design, a number of tenancy and legal issues need to be resolved and the works cannot be progressed until such matters are resolved. It would then be the intention to implement a package of works (i.e. the additional exit lane in addition to

works linked to the current planning application, provided the latter is granted consent) as soon as practicable.

10. Officer comments

Whilst the TS considers that the new building does not require any mitigation, it accepts that the applicant is aware of the traffic issues of both entering into the site from Hereford Road and exiting back out onto Hereford Road, particularly during peak periods, weekends and season events. Following discussions between officers and the transport consultant, the applicant is prepared to carry out some internal changes with the removal of severe speed humps and improvements to the internal roundabout. In addition, under a separate application (17/00369/FUL) the applicant is prepared to fund the provision of an additional exit lane onto Hereford Road. The highway authority welcome these features that may lead to improved internal traffic flow. The provision of the additional exit lane onto Hereford Road however is considered of marginal benefit to traffic exiting the site, but not benefiting ingress into the site from the Hereford Road/Meole Brace roundabout direction.

It is considered that the above mitigation works should be implemented prior to the development being first brought into use/open to trading.

Other matters

11. Officers have also discussed potential sustainability benefits with the applicants, in particular the regularisation of the footpath/cycleway links from Meole Brace roundabout. The desire lines are present on the grassed areas and clearly the proper surfacing of these desire lines would benefit current users seeking to walk/cycle to and from the retail park. Improvements to provide these proper links could provide longer term benefits in promoting walking and cycling to the retail park for customers and employees. The applicant/agent has indicated that this element could be considered in the future but is not considered a fundamental requirement in respect of the application current before the Council. The highway authority whilst disappointed with this position, concur that it is not required to make the development acceptable.

Conclusion

12. The reality is that the traffic issues surrounding the Sainsbury's/retail park are not straightforward. They are a combination of the success of the site as shopping destination, the constraints of a single point of access, the internal layout, and access road infrastructure. The improvements being promoted by the applicant are considered to be of benefit although this cannot be properly judged until those measures are in place. In relation to the current application however, the highway authority do not consider that a highway objection is either warranted, justified or defensible.

Recommendation:- Grant Permission subject to the conditions set out in the report to the 23 November 2017 Committee meeting (refer Appendix 1 to this report)