

Agenda Item A5	Committee Date 11 May 2009	Application Number 09/00147/FUL
Application Site J Sainsbury Plc Cable Street Lancaster Lancashire	Proposal Erection of an extension	
Name of Applicant Sainsbury's Ltd	Name of Agent Mrs Becki Hinchcliffe	
Decision Target Date 20 May 2009	Reason For Delay None	
Case Officer	Mr Martin Culbert	
Departure	No	
Summary of Recommendation	Approve	

1.0 The Site and its Surroundings

1.1 The site is the existing Sainsbury supermarket located to the north of Lancaster City Centre between Cable Street and the Rive Lune, on the central Lancaster one-way system. The store building occupies the western half of the site with the remainder forming an open, pay and display, car park behind a substantial screen wall. The walking distance from the store entrance to the Primary Retail area of Cheapside is about 300m.

The existing store building dates mostly from the 1980's and is mostly single storey. However it does incorporate nineteenth century facades along Cable Street frontage and a four storey, former industrial building at the junction of Water Street with Cable Street, which is used for storage and staff accommodation. To the rear of this element of the building, is a small service yard fronting and accessed from Water Street adjacent to the customer car park egress. The car park access is from the eastern end of Cable Street.

From the applicant's figures, the existing building has a gross floor space of 5806 square metres including the upper floors. The gross external footprint is 3162 square metres and the net sales area is 2808 square metres, when the checkout areas are excluded (in line with Competition Commission definitions). This further breaks down to 2214 square metres net convenience and 563 square metres comparison floor space.

Facing the site on the opposite side of Cable Street are a public house, an office block, the fire station and a public car park. On the opposite side of Water Street, to the west are residential apartments and the access to a mixed residential development facing the river.

To the east and north lies the Greyhound Bridge which carries the north bound A6 main road across the river to Morecambe and Carnforth, with Green Ayre Park and Skerton Bridge, carrying the south bound A6 beyond. Between the site and the river runs the Lune Valley Cycle Track.

The store forms a very traditional and key element of views of the historic heart of the City from the elevated bridges over the Lune and from the road to Morecambe and the residential frontages of Skerton to the north of the river. Its existing facades form the setting to this part of the City Centre Conservation Area, the boundary of which runs along Cable Street and Water Street. The site therefore has the potential to impact significantly upon the historic character and appearance of the City Centre.

The site is well located from the public transport point of view being close to the bus station and also the hub of the Districts cycle network, with good pedestrian links both across the river and into the City Centre.

The site lies within the Flood Zone 3A and the adjacent River Lune is a County Biological Heritage Site.

2.0 The Proposal

2.1 This proposal is a full application to build two relatively small extensions to the existing building, filling in/rounding off its north west and north east corners, together with the reconfiguration of the store interior to increase the retail floorspace.

The northwest extension would be single storey 26m x 16.75m and occupy the open staff car park and bin store area, to create additional storage space. The service yard and access would remain unaltered as would the car park exit. The design and materials would match the existing building with buff block work under a slated mansard roof which would essentially form the completion of the existing building into a rectangular form. This would still be set well back behind the palisade line of the service yard wall.

The north east extension would be two storeys high, measuring 23m x 16m and occupy a recess in the building presently used for customer parking. This extension would accommodate the relocated café at first floor, overlooking the river and car park and relocated toilets on the ground floor in the north east corner. This would enable the retail space, particularly at its eastern end, to be reconfigured to give a net increase of 1297 square metres (excluding checkouts) retail floor space, split into 841 square metres convenience and 455 square metres comparison floor space. This proposal would also close the store entrance onto Cable Street which would slightly increase the walking distance to the primary shopping area bus station. The resulting elevational changes to Cable Street would be limited to a fixed, obscure glazed, screen in the existing entrance archway and the widening of the existing pedestrian access through the car park wall. The layout of the car park would also be slightly altered to improve its functionality with the loss of only 11 spaces, but with increased disabled, parent child and cycle provision.

3.0 Site History

3.1 A number of planning applications have been made on the site of the existing Sainsbury's store. The original outline application was approved in 1985 (ref: 83/00890/OUT). Since then a number of applications have been approved on the site, including an extension to the store in June 1995 (ref: 02/00447/FUL).

A number of planning applications have been submitted with regard to the permitted delivery hours and opening hours of the store and permanent Sunday trading and deliveries were established in 1997/98 (ref: 97/01126/FUL and 98/00364/FUL respectively)

There are no other relevant applications relating to the site.

4.0 Consultation Responses

4.1 The following responses have been received from statutory consultees:

Statutory Consultee	Response
County Highways	Observations not received within statutory timescales.
Environment Agency	No objections in the light of proposed mitigation measures.
Environmental Health	Hours of construction to be restricted to 0800-1800 Monday to Saturday; external noise levels on Water Street to be limited following the development; observations on air quality impacts are awaited.
North West Bat Group	Observations not received within statutory timescales.

5.0 Neighbour Representations

5.1 Four letters have been received supporting the proposals. One letter has been received giving qualified support but suggesting that a pedestrian access should be created at the Water Street end of the building to reduce the walking/carrying distance to the Bus Station.

Three letters have been received from local residents objecting to the proposal on the grounds that further expansion of the store will exacerbate existing problems of inadequate access for goods vehicles, which already leads to manoeuvring in and blocking of the access to the Waterside development. The loss of the Water Street parking area, which is also used for parking delivery wagons and a student-bus, would necessitate these vehicles parking in front of residential properties and further aggravate congestion problems. It would also lead to the loss of the existing recycling bottle banks.

6.0 Principal Development Plan Policies

6.1 The only policy designation directly affecting the site is saved Policy T13 of the Local Plan which safeguards the site as a car park. Saved Policy E35 of the Plan states that development proposals which would adversely affect important views into and across a conservation area or lead to an unacceptable erosion of its historic form and layout, open spaces and townscape setting will not be permitted.

Policy SC5 of the Core Strategy seeks to maintain and improve the quality of development throughout the district but particularly within defined areas including Lancaster City Centre and approaches.

The key policy issues therefore are:

- a) Whether the proposal is compatible with local and national policies on retail and town centre development;
- b) Whether the design supports to Council's objectives set out in Policies E35 and SC5 quoted above.

7.0 Comment and Analysis

7.1 (A) Retail and Town Centre Issues

Notwithstanding the fact that the site is within Central Lancaster and has good public transport and cycle connections and a significant actual and potential walk-in population it is an "edge of centre" location for retail development which is a "town centre" use in terms of PPS6. The applicants have therefore submitted a PPS6 statement which need, scale, impact and sequential issues.

Quantative Need

If the extension trades a company average, and residential completions and commitments are taken into account, the Lancaster Retail Study identifies sufficient capacity for convenience and comparison goods to support a retail scheme of this size at the present time.

It is also clear that a scheme on this scale would have a limited impact on Lancaster City Centre provided that the retail floorspace is on the scale and of the convenience/comparison balance proposed.

Qualitative Need

The Lancaster Retail Study identifies the food offer in Lancaster as a weakness. The applicant's statement quotes the development of Sainsbury's retail offer as generating needs for additional shelf space. There is some evidence to suggest that weakness in convenience provision in South Lancaster are causing residents to make cross river trips to major supermarkets in Morecambe.

Scale

Lancaster is the largest centre in the District and this relatively small extension will not have a significant impact on the balance between new and existing retailing in the City.

Sequential Issues

It is necessary to demonstrate that the identified need cannot be met in a more central sequential location having regard to the scope for disaggregation. In this case, the question is whether the additional floor space could be accommodated within Lancaster City Centre. Given that this is an extension to an existing store, there are strong functional linkages between the new floor space and the existing store and that the operation of two stores would cause operational difficulties.

There are clearly no sites within the Town Centre which could accommodate the extended store. It is considered therefore that there are no sequentially preferable sites which could accommodate the proposed development.

Impact

Impact on Lancaster City Centre is a key issue which is growing in importance. The applicant's turnover figures for the new floor space are based on a 50% benchmark turnover which may well be too low. At worst however they represent a 3% impact on Lancaster City centre convenience turnover and 1.2% impact on comparison turnover, which is within acceptable limits. Switches from out of centre destinations such as Asda may also have some benefit for the City Centre in encouraging shoppers to visit the City Centre during food shopping trips.

(B) Design

In terms of design, there appear to be two principle issues of concern: -

The first whether the existing service facilities are adequate for the expanded use and the loss of the Water Street parking area would lead to congestion on Water Street and loss of amenity for the resident opposite. The views of the County Highway Authority in this respect are anticipated in time for Committee.

The second is the design of the proposed first floor café element of the building, which in the submitted scheme has a contemporary roof form, material and fenestration. The design is considered to be inappropriate in this particular location which would have a significant discordant impact on important views of Lancaster's historic centre and castle from the major northern approaches to the city and from across the river generally. These proposals would thus conflict with the requirements of Core Strategy policy SC5 and the Local Plan Saved Policy E35 and be unacceptable. Discussions have taken place with the applicant regarding this and other minor design issues and amended proposals of a more sympathetic form and materials are anticipated in time for Committee.

8.0 Conclusions

8.1 This proposal is acceptable in terms of local and national retail planning policies and the retail element is supported by adequate convenience and comparison capacity. The proposals will “round off” the existing development and facilitate a much more efficient use of the existing retail floor space. This would provide a quality, edge of centre, food store and would be likely to strengthen the vitality of the retail centre rather than detract from it. Subject to the receipt of satisfactory elevation details and any revised servicing facilities that may be necessary, this proposal can be supported.

Recommendation

That the application be delegated to the Head of Planning Services with a recommendation to grant **PLANNING PERMISSION** subject to the receipt of satisfactory amended proposals and subject to the following conditions:

- 1 Standard Full Permission
- 2 Amended Plans
- 3 Development in accordance with approved plans.
- 4 Samples of materials to be agreed.
- 5 Hours of construction.
- 6 Noise limits at face of residential properties post implementation.
- 7 Retail floor space to be limited to 4100 square metres (excluding checkouts)
- 8 No more than 25% comparison goods i.e. 1050 square metres net.
- 9 As may be further requested by consultees or required in connection with any revised proposals.

Human Rights Act

This recommendation has been reached after consideration of the provisions of The Human Rights Act. Unless otherwise stated in this report, the issues arising do not appear to be of such magnitude to override the responsibility of the City Council to regulate land use for the benefit of the community as a whole, in accordance with national law.

Background Papers

1. None.