



Planning Potential were successful in securing planning permission at Committee for redevelopment of a brownfield site to deliver a bespoke new food store to serve Farnborough Village, providing a high-quality store and accessible and affordable retail choice for local people.

Planning Potential were instructed by Aldi Stores Ltd. to assist in securing permission for their new store on Farnborough Way. The proposals provided an opportunity to bring a vacant longstanding commercial site back into beneficial economic use, improve the retail offer of the area for residents who didn't currently benefit from local access to a food store, create jobs, and promote more sustainable shopping patterns through reducing the need to travel.

Planning Potential initially led pre-application discussions with London Borough of Bromley, which were followed by submission of an application. This included a robust sequential assessment that demonstrated there were no alternative suitable or available sites to locate the store and that the site's location was entirely appropriate for a store of this scale. A sustainable and bespoke design was promoted which reflected the site's established commercial setting along Farnborough Way whilst considering its more sensitive relationship with residential properties within the village to the south.

In addition to this technical justification, we conducted a wide-ranging community consultation exercise, engaging with local stakeholders and local residents, including through door-to-door engagement with residents. This generated substantial interest in the scheme, including significant local support.

Despite efforts, Officers questioned the store's accessibility given its low PTAL, the design of the scheme and amenity impact on residential properties to the south. Officers recommended refusal of the application, however, at Committee, Members recognised the merits of the scheme and initially resolved to defer any decision to allow for further design changes, but subsequently didn't consider these had gone far enough and refused permission.

Following this, Planning Potential worked closely with the multi-disciplinary team to review options to allow the scheme to proceed including challenging the team to push boundaries so as to address all previous concerns expressed.

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The result was a complete overhaul of the design and further justification demonstrating the site's location was appropriate, and also that retail use was the most sensible use of the site. Through our research we also identified significant shortcomings in the way that PTAL ratings are defined, highlighting that use of a blunt 'one size fits all' approach could ultimately result in communities missing out on investment and access to affordable shopping.

The robust approach adopted led to Officers confirming that previous reasons for refusal relating to design and amenity had been addressed, however they remained concerned with the accessibility of the store, and again recommended refusal.

Working alongside the project team, Planning Potential prepared clear and concise planning focused messaging ahead of committee to demonstrate the proposals were acceptable and highlighting the extensive work which had been undertaken to address previously raised concerns. Planning Potential also set up and presented at a pre-committee member briefing session. In advance of this we identified all issues raised throughout the course of the project being 'live' and evidenced how these had been addressed. We also used this information to draft the committee address.

Thanks to the continued perseverance and robustness of the approach, alongside the extent of engagement that had been undertaken throughout the entire process and in the lead up to Committee, members recognised the benefits of the proposals for the area and resolved to grant planning permission.

### Summary of achievements

- Coordination of multiple rounds of pre-application discussions with the LPA
- Coordination of planning application preparation and submission, including project management of the consultant team
- Preparation of a robust planning case
- Extensive and co-ordinated planning and communications approach, securing significant support from local politicians and the local community
- Overturning Officers recommendation to secure resolution to grant at planning committee