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Councillor T. Mannering,
55, Cherrytree Road,
Bradley,
Wrexham. LL11 4DN

Councillor D. Griffiths
Ty Newydd, Glan Lyn Road,
Bradley,
Wrexham. LL11 4BB

27th January 2021

Dear Councillors Mannering and Griffiths

Lindop Toyota Planning Application

I am the owner of Lindop Toyota. Our company has been the local Toyota dealers in Wrexham and Queensferry for over 40 years. I purchased the Company in 2003 from the founding Lindop brothers and relocated my family from Derbyshire to Wrexham shortly afterwards.

We pride ourselves in being a locally owned family business providing secure employment and great customer service in the Wrexham and surrounding area. We also pride ourselves in representing the Toyota brand which is the market leader in hybrid vehicles and clean vehicle technology.

I am writing to you with reference to the above planning application which I understand the Planning Officer is likely to recommend be rejected.

I would like to add my personal input into the planning application to ensure that the planning committee are fully aware of the circumstances behind the application and the consequences of rejection.

Background;

We have operated from our site in Llay New Road since 1990. When the dealership was first established the national market share for the Toyota franchise was less than 2% of the total market, and the annual new car selling targets set by Toyota were below 180 cars per year. In 2020 Toyota's national market share was close to 6% and the annual sales target for our Wrexham site was 413 cars.

All automotive main dealers operate under a franchise system with a rolling 2 year contract awarded by their particular new car brand. Based upon the investment required this is not a great deal by way of security as it means the new car brand can elect to give a dealer 2 years notice of termination. There are 5 main reasons why a dealer may have their contract terminated,

- Lack of performance versus new car selling targets.
- Poor customer feedback and satisfaction levels
- Financial performance leading to viability concerns.
- Premises not meeting the latest franchise requirements and standards.



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- Ability to satisfy the aspirations of the brand and meet future capacity requirements to ensure the site has a long-term strategic future.

The Lindop site in Llay is currently profitable and is achieving the levels of new car sales needed to meet Toyota targets. The premises do meet the current franchise requirements and standards. The big issues are,

- Negative customer feedback- not on service levels but on customer's ability to access a parking space,
- The capacity requirements for the future. The capacity issue is entirely about car parking and the additional space that will be required for the establishment of dedicated spaces for electric vehicle charging points.

In order to make the best possible use of our existing site area but minimise the disruption to our local residents;

- We avoid parking on the local roads as far as is realistically possible.
- We have as many of our people working from home as possible,
- We use a sophisticated appointment system to ensure we spread our customer visits throughout the working day.
- We have moved all vehicle cleaning and body repair to a rented site on Llay Industrial Estate.
- We store surplus vehicles off site.
- We keep used vehicles held for sale to a bare minimum level relative to the normal levels of comparable businesses.
- We have already looked for alternative sites in the Wrexham area and there is nothing that is suitable, so relocation is not an option.

We have always done our very best to avoid parking on the local roads but, at various times during the year, we do not have the capacity on site to park everyone. This leads to staff and customers parking on side roads. The proposed car park is not only for our customers but also for the local community. We have always had a good relationship with the local residents and our Managing Director, Glyn Davies, has spoken to several of them regarding the plans and received overwhelming support.

Despite all the above we do not have enough outside area available for the day-to-day business levels that we must be able to satisfy in order to ensure that we are able to meet our customers' and Toyota's requirements in the future.

Since this planning process commenced some three years ago there have been some very significant developments which have not been included so far in the detail supporting our application. These are;

- The need to make provision for 5 electrical charging points recognising the imminent addition of full electric and more plug-in hybrid models to the Toyota range. Clearly this is entirely the right strategy for the future and fits the UK Government's targets banning the sale of internal combustion powered passenger cars from 2030. However, this means

we now need to dedicate space for customer cars to be recharged for up to 45 minutes at a time to support their requirements.

- In line with this point above Toyota GB have now mandated that all their business partners submit a capacity planning document for all Toyota Centres to ensure that the site areas are appropriate for the future business requirements. Any Toyota Centre failing to fulfil the requirements will receive notice of termination of the franchise.
- During 2019 and 2020 it has become very clear that customer demand for service and repair is increasing as our mix of hybrid vehicle sales increases. These vehicles are extremely specialised and therefore more customers want to bring them to us for safe and qualified service and repair rather than non-specialist independent garages. This also applies to MOT inspections. The battery life of Toyota hybrid vehicles is guaranteed for 15 years providing the cars are serviced within the Toyota network and have an annual hybrid system health check which is free of charge. This means we are also seeing increasing numbers of older hybrid cars.
- All the above means that we are now planning to increase the size of our aftersales team with one additional qualified technician, two new apprentices, one driver/cleaner and one further receptionist.
- We have recently re-looked at the detail in our application and would not now be proposing the change the existing entrance.

Our proposal is entirely restricted to increasing the customer parking and electrical charging space that we need at this site. We do not have the option to move these requirements elsewhere. We are not proposing any building works, we are not requiring any additional entrances and we will not be disrupting the lives of local residents during the alteration phase or afterwards.

The site in question is immediately adjacent to our existing customer parking area, is screened from the roadway and is in very poor condition. It is prone to flooding due to poor drainage. I have attached some photographs for reference.

We have already spent considerable sums of money on planning advice, flood reviews & management proposals and architect's plans & drawings. We are happy to guarantee that the work we are proposing is done to the highest standards and will meet all the regulations for alteration and use.

We can also confirm that this proposal will ensure that the Llay site will be of the necessary size and quality to continue to represent the Toyota franchise for many years to come.

Consequences of rejection;

Toyota is a prestige brand, Toyota is committed to the UK post Brexit and is committed to Wales in the form of the engine plant at Deeside.

It is no exaggeration to say that the future of Lindop Toyota in Wrexham is dependent upon this proposal being passed. If we are unable to meet Toyota's capacity requirements, we are unable to provide electric vehicle charging points, and we are unable to overcome the negative customer feedback concerning car parking then it is inevitable that we will be facing the termination of our franchise agreement in the near future.

If this happens then it is most likely that Toyota will review their franchise plans for the rest of our dealerships in Queensferry and Llandudno. This will result in the termination of both of

these locations at the same time and then Toyota will then review their plans at a regional level. Based upon precedents elsewhere and our knowledge of industry trends it is extremely unlikely that Wrexham would be seen as a relevant location for a Toyota franchise in the future.

This would be a very negative outcome for Wrexham, for Lindop employees and for Lindop customers.

I implore the Committee to fully consider our application, the sheer business necessity that is behind it and the consequences of rejection. We would like to invite you and any other members of the committee to visit the site to see the situation for themselves and we would be delighted to explain in more detail via a video meeting if this is possible.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Hopewell', with a stylized, cursive script.

Steve Hopewell
Owner, Lindop Toyota