

Co-operative Group Food Store Storage Area and External Improvements Rhostyllen, Wrexham Planning Statement

on behalf of Co-operative Group



P/2016/0867



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Appendix A – Site Proposal: Drawing Ref: 7845.08 P(000)01 RevA

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Nexus Planning on behalf of The Co-operative Group ("the Applicant") in support of a planning application P/2016/0876 for the erection of a storage unit and an improved external layout for storage and parking at Rhostyllen, Wrexham.

1.2 Purpose of works - improvements.

1.3 This Planning Statement is structured as follows:

Section 2 Site Description and Context

Section 3 The Proposal

Section 4 Planning Policy

Section 5 Planning Considerations

Section 6 Summary and Conclusion

1.4 This Planning Statement should be read in conjunction with the following information that forms part of the planning application:

- Application form and certificates
- Cover letter
- Location and Site Plan
- Proposed layout – drawing ref: 7845.08 P(000)01 RevA
- Design and Access Statement
- Transport Statement

2.0 Site Description and Context

Site Description

- 2.1 The site is located at 50 Wrexham Road in Rhostyllen at the junction of Wrexham Road and Eldon Grove.
- 2.2 The site is an existing Co-op store comprising 248 sqm gross floorspace and car park for 9 vehicles (including 2 disabled spaces).
- 2.3 The main access to the site is off Wrexham Road with an egress on to Eldon Grove. The disabled parking spaces are accessed separately off Eldon Grove.
- 2.4 Community facilities on site include a Post Office and ATM.
- 2.5 The area is predominantly residential, including neighbouring properties. The site is in a sustainable location. There are regular bus services operating along Wrexham Road and Henblas Road. The nearest bus stops are located opposite the Black Lion Inn which are around a minute's walk from the Co-op store.
- 2.6 There are no trees or soft landscaping that will be affected by the proposals.

Background and Site Constraints

- 2.7 This is an important and established store which has been operating for a number of years serving the day to day retail needs of the local population.
- 2.8 As recent trends in shopping and retailing operations have changed the daily operational challenges have increased which has made it increasingly difficult for the Rhostyllen store to meet the needs of its customers. The rise in multi-trip convenience shopping has been researched and assessed in the 2015 Co-operative Group Convenience Report (*'Back to the Future: 50 Years of Convenience Retailing'*). The average shopper in 2015 now visits their local supermarket on average 3.8 times a week, making multiple trips for smaller numbers of items – an average of 3.5 items each trip. This means that stores are required to regularly restock their supplies to keep up with customer demands for daily items such as milk and bread.
- 2.9 The Rhostyllen store is no longer fit for purpose and in order for the Co-op to be compliant with updated legislation, environmental and health and safety matters need to be continually addressed.

- 2.10 Customers and staff of this store report that the internal and external layout makes visiting the store less pleasant. The restrictions in back of house storage space means that the sales floor and external areas are potentially hazardous for customers and staff.
- 2.11 Currently deliveries are brought into the store via the ramp and customer entrance. Goods are stored in-store, which constrains the safe movement of customers and staff around the aisles, creating hazardous conditions and detracting from the Co-op's offer. Customers are unable at times to easily access produce or the Post Office counter, and whilst this store is the main village convenience store, the current offer and store arrangements are forcing some customers to travel elsewhere for their day to day convenience needs.
- 2.12 Once the goods are unloaded the empty trolley cages are moved and stored in front of the store (to the west) adjacent to existing parking spaces. They are not secured.
- 2.13 Externally, of the 9 spaces provided 7 spaces are located to the south and west of the store in the main car park accessed off Wrexham Road. The 2 disabled spaces are accessed off Eldon Grove (to the east), near the main car park's egress point and adjacent to the ATM.
- 2.14 The separation of spaces and activities creates conflict between pedestrians and vehicles manoeuvring the site. The applicant is seeking to improve health and safety and highways safety on site through the proposed improvements.
- 2.15 In more recent years the Co-operative Group has attempted to invest in the store's improvement. This has been relatively unsuccessful due to the lack of storage space available and the continued lack of significant investment is prohibiting the store's ability to trade effectively. This is clearly a cause for concern for the Co-op and as a consequence puts the store's future at risk.
- 2.16 The new planning application is not seeking to increase the net sales floorspace of the store but is proposed to enable the improvement of the existing store to trade more effectively and to deliver the improvements sought for staff and customers.

Co-operative Group Food Store Investment Programme

- 2.17 The Co-operative Group has been undergoing a series of changes and in 2016 announced a rebrand that put membership at the heart of the organisation. As part of these changes the Co-operative Group is investing in a national programme of refurbishments and improvements to their existing food stores across the country.
- 2.18 This multi-million-pound investment programme is focused around enhancing the customer's experience and Co-op staff's working environment, improving the store's aesthetic and

amenity value within the local community, and improving operational management and maintenance.

- 2.19 At Rhostyllen, the proposal for a new storage unit is fundamentally to improve the Co-op's operational management and to be environmental health compliant. As part of the proposed improvements the applicant is also seeking to improve the management of car parking and the store's internal and external operations.

Parking Survey

- 2.20 As a result of highways concerns for the proposals the applicant undertook a parking survey in November 2016. A Transport Statement summarising the results has been submitted to the LPA and should read in conjunction with the material which forms part of this application.
- 2.21 The evidence illustrates that during the vast majority of a typical trading day the number of spaces proposed once the proposed works has been completed will be more than sufficient to accommodate the demand from the existing customer base.
- 2.22 Furthermore, an overall improvement will also be achieved in highway safety terms through the rationalisation of the external storage and car parking area.

Esclusham Community Council Comments

- 2.23 In response to the comments made by Cyngor Cymuned Esclusham further information has been submitted to the LPA in this Planning Statement, the Transport Statement and drawing 7845.08 P(000)01 has been updated – refer to RevA. Cyngor Cymuned Esclusham comments include:
- a. *Cyngor Cymuned Esclusham has serious Health & Safety concerns with regard to pedestrians being confronted on the footpath by trollies being wheeled back and forth from the proposed storage unit.*
 - b. *It appears that the proposed siting of the storage unit would result in the loss of the disabled parking area.*
 - c. *The proposed storage unit would be out of character with the surrounding streets and immediate environs.*
 - a. *It seems that there would be regular moving of food items, presumably by trolley, in and out of the front door of the shop, with subsequent concerns regarding customers entering and leaving the premises.*

2.24 These comments are addressed in the following section.

3.0 The Proposal

Description of the Proposal

- 3.1 In 2016 the Co-operative Group announced a rebrand that put membership at the heart of the organisation. As part of these changes the Co-operative Group is investing in a multi-million-pound national investment programme to roll-out improvements to their existing food stores.
- 3.2 This will enable the Co-op to enhance their existing offer for customers and staff as well as comply with health and safety and environmental health legislation.
- 3.3 The proposed investment at the Rhostyllen store is to improve the external storage and car parking arrangements. The application is seeking permission to:
- Erect a new storage unit – for the storage of goods.
 - Re-arrange the car parking layout and access management - 7 parking spaces (including 1 disabled parking space) will be provided in the main car park.
 - Provide cycle storage for 3 x cycle stands.

Pedestrian and Vehicle Safety

- 3.4 As described earlier in this Statement, the proposals are to improve pedestrian and vehicle movement around the site.
- The movement of customers arriving on foot or by vehicle will be focused to the south and west of the site, off Wrexham Road and via the main car park to the store entrance.
 - The storage of goods and movement of trolley cages will be focused to the east of the site. The empty cages will be securely stored adjacent to the storage unit with a key clamp guard rail. By providing a new storage unit, goods will not be forced to be stored internally in the customer aisles of the store, which is currently a potential **safety issue and detracts from the store's offer**. The movement of goods via the front entrance of the store will not change. This is common practice in servicing small convenience stores. **The provision of a storage unit will however enable the store's staff to better manage the timing and distribution of goods in to the store.**

- The removal of the 2 parking spaces to the east will therefore limit vehicle movement off Eldon Grove and improve the main vehicle egress onto Eldon Grove.
 - A disabled parking space will re-provided in the main car park.
- 3.5 The above measures will improve potential health and safety and highway safety matters by separating areas of activity and the conflict of movement between pedestrians and vehicles. Overall, highways safety benefits would be delivered through the rationalisation of storage and parking area.

Appearance

- 3.6 The proposed storage unit is a single storey pitched roof building. The scale and appearance of the building has been designed to be in keeping with the residential scale of neighbouring garages and the existing Co-op store.
- 3.7 The Design and Access Statement and Drawing Ref: 7845.08 P(000)01 RevA should be referred to for further detail.

4.0 Planning Policy

- 4.1 This section briefly summarises relevant local and national planning policies and guidance.
- 4.2 When determining a planning application, the relevant authority (Wrexham County Borough Council Local Planning Authority) is under a statutory obligation to make their determination in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Wrexham Unitary Development Plan (UDP)

- 4.3 The Wrexham Unitary Development Plan was adopted in February 2005 and is the adopted development for the period 1996-2011.
- 4.4 Rhostyllen is an Urban Village located to the west of Wrexham. The site is within the defined settlement boundary of Rhostyllen.
- 4.5 In addition to land use development the UDP takes account of social, economic and environmental considerations and recognises that there are run down environments in some of the urban villages to the west of the town.
- 4.6 UDP policies ensure that development is promoted in accessible locations where community facilities are available and where adequate access to public transport exists.
- 4.7 The Strategy seeks to safeguard the amenity of settlements and secure economy and efficiency in the use of land resources through the regeneration of built-up areas. The Plan states under Paragraph 3.4 Settlement Growth b) Urban Villages that some urban villages, including Rhostyllen, developments have been rapid and extensive. As a result, environmental thresholds have been reached and services and facilities are under pressure.
- 4.8 The following policies of the adopted Wrexham UDP are of relevance to this planning application.

Strategic Policies

- 4.9 Strategic Policy PS4 establishes the need for new developments to promote the use of sustainable travel and states that:
- 4.10 'Development should maintain the existing settlement pattern and character and be integrated with the existing transport network to help reduce the overall need to travel and encourage the use of alternatives to the car.'

General Development Principles

- 4.11 Policy GDP1 states that all new development should:-
- 4.12 Ensure that built development in its scale, design and layout, and in its use of materials and landscaping, accords with the character of the site and makes a positive contribution to the appearance of the nearby locality.
- b) Take account of personal and community safety and security in the design and layout of development and public / private spaces.
- d) Ensure safe and convenient pedestrian and vehicular access to and from development sites, both on site and in the nearby locality.
- e) Ensure that built development is located where it has convenient access to public transport facilities, and is well related to pedestrian and cycle routes wherever possible.
- k) Secure the development of sustainable communities, through the promotion of the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area.

Shopping

- 4.13 Policy S6 Local Need Shopping states that small scale shopping developments should be permitted provided that:

'the development is safely accessible for customers on foot;

the development does not harm residential amenity and / or does not give rise to traffic problems e.g. onstreet parking that cannot be addressed;

the sales floor area of each development does not exceed 300 square metres.'

- 4.14 Paragraph 8.13 establishes that:

'Outside of the defined shopping centres, but within prescribed settlement limits it is acknowledged that there may be a role for local need shops that cater for the day to day needs of consumers in the immediate area and are conveniently accessible on foot. The 'corner shop' or small convenience goods store can often be easily assimilated into the predominantly residential neighbourhood that it serves.'

- 4.15 Paragraph 8.13 goes on to state that:

'Local need establishments not exceeding a sales floor area of around 300 square metres are characteristic of the area and would not materially detrimentally affect the vitality and viability of district shopping centres.'

- 4.16 Under Policy S9 Loss of Local Facilities, Paragraph 8.16 establishes that:

'Many neighbourhoods, villages and hamlets within the County Borough contain small scale shopping and commercial facilities which are vital to their social and economic wellbeing. These facilities usually take the form of post offices, small convenience stores, banks and public houses. The loss of these facilities could detrimentally affect local residents' quality of life and create a need to travel to facilities further afield. This policy seeks to retain facilities that provide important services for the residents of small or remote communities in particular.'

Community Facilities

- 4.17 Paragraph 9.1 recognises the benefits of local facilities in smaller communities and states that:

'Community facilities (e.g. village halls, post offices, local shops, public houses, schools, etc.) provide a valuable ingredient of community identity, often providing a focus for social intercourse, and are essential for community development.'

- 4.18 Paragraph 9.1 goes on to state that [community facilities] is a key element in the economy of the County Borough and is becoming increasingly important.

Transport

- 4.19 Policy T8 Parking requires that new development provides states that *'development granted planning permission will be required to provide vehicle parking spaces either on site or nearby, in accordance with the Council's current parking standards. Special regard will be paid to the following factors, as appropriate:-*

- *the availability of public transport nearby,*
- *proximity to public car parking,*
- *proximity to local services and facilities,*
- *road safety hazards and amenity considerations arising from on-street parking in the vicinity of the site.'*

- 4.20 Paragraph 10.10 provides further clarification regarding local parking standards and acknowledges that:

'Occasionally...full compliance with these standards may neither be practicable nor appropriate (e.g. where there may be insurmountable access, amenity, space or layout constraints) particularly where key urban regeneration...are denied...The Council recognises that the management of car parking may be used in the future as a means to encourage the use of public transport, footpaths and cycleways, where this is appropriate.'

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 9 2016

- 4.21 The PPW sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government and is supplemented by a series of Technical Advice Notes (TANs).

Planning for Sustainability

- 4.22 Paragraph 4.2.2 states that *'The planning system provides for a presumption in favour of sustainable development to ensure that social, economic and environmental issues are balanced and integrated, at the same time, by the decision-taker when: in taking decisions on individual planning applications.'*
- 4.23 Paragraph 4.2.3 requires that the determination must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.24 In contributing to the Well-being of Future Generations Act goals, Paragraph 4.3.1 states that decisions should:
- *Promote access to...shopping [and] community facilities, maximising opportunities for community development and social welfare.*
 - *Promote quality, lasting, environmentally-sound and flexible employment opportunities.*
 - *Respect and encourage diversity in the local economy.*
 - *Locate developments so as to minimise the demand for travel, especially by private car.*
- 4.25 Paragraph 4.6.1 recognises the strengths of urban communities and states that *'development can help to arrest the decline in community facilities and deliver environmentally sound modernisation, re-use or replacement of urban infrastructure.'*

4.26 Paragraph 4.7.4 states the '*Local planning authorities should assess the extent to which...new development are consistent with minimising the need to travel and increasing accessibility by modes other than the private car.*'

4.27 Paragraph 4.9.2 states that '*many previously developed sites in built-up areas may be considered suitable for development because their re-use will promote sustainability objectives.*'

Economic Development

4.28 Paragraph 7.1.3 states '*the planning system should support economic and employment growth alongside social and environmental consideration within the context of sustainable development*', and wherever possible, local planning authorities should aim to '*align jobs and services with housing so as to reduce the need for travel, especially by car.*'

4.29 Paragraph 7.6.1 states that '*in determining applications for economic land uses authorities should take account of the likely economic benefits of the development*' which includes the number of jobs expected to be retained on the site.

Transport

4.30 Chapter 8 Transport places an emphasis on promoting sustainable development that encourages more sustainable and healthy forms of travel, and minimising the need to travel.

4.31 It states that ensuring that development is accessible by means other than the private car will help to meet the Welsh Government's objectives for social inclusion and encouraging cycling and walking will contribute to the aim of improving the levels of health in Wales.

4.32 Paragraph 8.4.2 states that '*Car parking provision is a major influence in the choice and means of transport and the pattern of development. Local authorities should ensure that new developments provide lower levels of parking than have generally been achieved in the past. Minimum parking standards are no longer appropriate.*'

Retail and Commercial Development

4.33 The PPW recognises that retail and commercial activities have changed over the last 40 years and that through this period of change retailing has had to adapt and transform themselves in order to compete in an increasingly diverse market.

4.34 Paragraph 10.2.8 recognises that '*Individual small shops and businesses, such as convenience stores...which are not part of an established retail and commercial centre, can*

play an important economic and social role, particularly in....urban areas with limited local provision, and their loss can be damaging to a local community.'

- 4.35 It goes on to state that '*The role of small businesses should be taken into account...in development management decision making.*'

Other Plans and Guidance Notes

Wrexham Local Planning Guidance Note No.16 (2011)

- 4.36 This note provides guidance on the parking standards that the Council applies to new developments and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.
- 4.37 The note recognises that people make transport choices, and the way in which people are likely to choose to travel to and from developments is key to determining how many parking spaces will be required to service it, which can be influenced by:
- *The availability of parking spaces on site*
 - *How regular and frequent public transport is*
 - *How easy it is to access a site by safe walking and cycling routes*
- 4.38 It states '*Where developments are close to local services and facilities and/or are in areas where people are able to walk or cycle to them or travel to them easily by public transport, it may be appropriate for less on site parking to be provided than for developments in remoter areas.*'
- 4.39 The parking standard set out set a maximum standard and in accordance with national policy the Council has no minimum parking standard. The guidance suggests that the maximum standard for A1 shops of up to 300 sqm is 1 car space per 15 sqm gross floor space.
- 4.40 The guidance suggests that extensions to existing buildings should not normally result in the loss of existing parking space unless otherwise justified within the submitted proposal. Developers should therefore clearly demonstrate that the amount of parking provided will meet likely demand.
- 4.41 In order to promote sustainable transport choices, new developments should provide areas for the safe parking of cycles.

Council Plan 2016-2017

- 4.42 This document is the overarching plan for the Council, detailing their focus, current performance and the Council's contribution to the Community Strategy.
- 4.43 The Council Plan- Strategic Theme: Place highlights the Council's objective of *'investing in attractive, safe and inclusive communities'*.
- 4.44 Under Objective PL3 of the Council Plan, the Council identifies the need to promote *'communities with sustainable, attractive settlements, neighbourhoods, buildings and spaces.'* As part of this, the Council states that:
 - 4.45 *'We will promote development and uses of land that create employment, regenerate communities and build attractive, safe and accessible places in which to live, while also protecting the environment.'*
- 4.46 To ensure such a priority objective is met, the council establishes that it will support the promotion of economic opportunity and regeneration communities and securing the provision of community facilities and infrastructure.

5.0 Planning Considerations

- 5.1 In this section we assess the proposed scheme, having regard to the planning policy context set out in the previous section.
- 5.2 On balance, it is considered that the proposal is acceptable taking account of the material considerations and evidence provided in support of the planning application. The proposal complies with the policies and objectives of the Development Plan.
- 5.3 The planning considerations are discussed below.

Basis for Decision-Taking

- 5.4 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless there are material considerations which indicate otherwise.
- 5.5 In the absence of an up to date plan significant weight must therefore be applied to the policies of the adopted Development Plan dependent upon their consistency with Planning Policy Wales.

Principle of Development

- 5.6 Paragraph 4.2.2 of the Planning Policy Wales ("PPW") asks decision-makers to apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 5.7 The store is located within the settlement boundary and defined urban village of Rhostyllen, a large residential area to the west of Wrexham. The site is already developed and in a highly sustainable location off Wrexham Road. The UDP states that its policies are to ensure that development is promoted in accessible locations where community facilities are available and where adequate access to public transport exists. Various local and national planning policies (refer to Chapter 4) promote the use of previously developed sites in existing urban areas for local convenience and community facilities.
- 5.8 In this case the principle of development is already established as an existing Co-op convenience store for class A1 use.
- 5.9 The focus is therefore only on whether the small scale, additional ancillary storage floor space and external improvements are appropriate and acceptable.

- 5.10 UDP Policy S6 Local Need Shopping states that small scale shopping developments should be permitted providing certain criteria are met. Whilst the application is only for the provision of storage space and external improvements to an existing store, nevertheless, Policy S6 Local Needs Shopping states that the development should be permitted providing that: *the development is safely accessible for customers on foot; the development does not harm residential amenity and/or does not give rise to traffic problems, and; the sales floor area of each development does not exceed 300 square metres.* The development complies with these criteria, which is discussed in more detail through the remainder of this section.
- 5.11 UDP Paragraph 8.13 states within prescribed settlement limits it is acknowledged that there may be a role for local need shops that cater for the day to day needs of consumers in the immediate area and are conveniently accessible of foot.

Local Convenience and Community Facilities

- 5.12 The application is for a storage unit (which is ancillary to the main use) and external improvements. There is no proposed increase in net sales floor space.
- 5.13 Fundamentally, the applicant is seeking permission to deliver small scale improvements to an existing store that will deliver significant, measureable improvement. The proposals will enable the store to operate more effectively and enhance its existing trading capacity whilst complying with the relevant health and safety and environmental health legislations.
- 5.14 The proposed development is an opportunity for the store to make significant investment in this important and valued community facility and better contribute to meeting the day to day needs of the local community. The Co-op store is the main local convenience store in a large village. It includes the local Post Office and provides an ATM. With the exception of the corner shop Premier Central Stores on Trinity Street, the nearest local convenience store or post office are some travelling distance outside the village of Rhostyllen.
- 5.15 The Co-op has been undergoing a series of recent changes. In 2016 it announced a rebrand that put membership at the heart of the organisation. As part of these changes the Co-op Group has committed to invest in a multi-million-pound programme of improvements to its stores across the country.
- 5.16 Rhostyllen is an important store in the Co-op's portfolio, but is not without its problems which have been described earlier in this Statement. With modern trends in retailing and consumer choices changing the way the Co-op is needing to operate, the applicant has over recent years attempted and failed to invest significantly in this store and rectify the operational concerns which are having serious implications on the store, its staff and valued customers.

The Co-op is committed to safeguarding the welfare of its staff and customers whilst delivering an attractive and pleasant customer experience which are key priorities to be delivered through the proposed works.

- 5.17 With the Co-op's national investment programme in its existing stores being rolled-out, the Rhostyllen store has the opportunity to benefit from the level of investment that it will require to secure the future vitality and viability of the store.
- 5.18 The store is not performing as well against Area Averages and could be significantly better. In mid-November 2017 the reported Co-op week's sales performance was -0.05% on like-for-like in the previous year, compared to the Area Average of +2.05%. On Year to Date sales performance the Rhostyllen Co-op store performed -1.74% below the Area Average. Trading performance in 2016 has actually been an improvement on previous years which is a reflection of the improving economic climate. However, this does not detract from the fundamental issues the store is keen to resolve and which will continue to impair the store's future trading performance.
- 5.19 The store is approaching a critical stage. In 2017 the Co-op is committed to investing in the store's external improvements, subject to being granted planning permission. In 2018 the store will be a candidate for an internal refit. However, without the proposed external improvements being implemented (thus enabling internal improvements to commence) this is unlikely to happen. Should the store not be able to address their daily operational deficiencies the Co-op has confirmed that the store will be at risk.
- 5.20 The Co-op has looked for an alternative site for relocation. To date a suitable site has not been found. The proposed large residential development off Wrexham Road (on National Trust land) could offer an opportunity for either re-location or if the store was to remain in-situ, to further enhance the parking and highways access arrangements off the new roundabout proposed at Wrexham Road/Eldon Grove, subject to highways agreement. However, due to the lack of development delivery on this site it is not something the Co-op can therefore consider as part of the store's strategy in the foreseeable future.
- 5.21 Returning to national and local planning policies which clearly establish the importance of local shops, post offices and community facilities as valuable ingredients of a local community.
- 5.22 UDP Policy S6 Local Need Shopping establishes that the role of local need shops that cater for the day to day needs of consumers. It goes on to state that a sales floor area of around 300 sqm are characteristic of the area. The existing sales area of the Co-op store is less than 248 sqm and is not proposed to change as part of these proposals.

- 5.23 In accordance with PPW Paragraph 4.3.1 the proposal would 'promote access to...shopping [and] community facilities, maximising opportunities for community development and social welfare' which also contributes to the Well-being of Future Generation Act goals.
- 5.24 Under UDP Policy S9 Loss of Local Facilities, Paragraph 8.16 supports the application proposals by recognising that small scale shopping and commercial facilities are vital to a neighbourhood's social and economic wellbeing and that the loss of these facilities could detrimentally affect local residents' quality of life and create a need to travel to facilities further afield. The policy clearly seeks to retain facilities that provide important services for the residents of small communities.
- 5.25 In accordance with PPW Paragraph 4.6.1 the development would '*help to arrest the decline in community facilities and deliver environmentally sound modernisation [and] re-use of urban infrastructure.*'
- 4.48 PPW Retail and Commercial Paragraph 10.2.8 recognises that '*Individual small shops and businesses, such as convenience stores...can play an important economic and social role, particularly in...urban areas with limited local provision, and their loss can be damaging to a local community.*'
- 5.26 It goes on to clearly state that the role of small businesses should be taken into account in development management decision making.

Highways and Access

- 5.27 The store is in a highly sustainable location. It is located within the residential urban area of Rhostyllen and the application is on an existing developed site. The provision and retention of community facilities is clearly supported in national and local planning policy.
- 5.28 The purpose of the external improvements proposed are to enable the rationalisation of the parking and storage area. This will improve usage, better define spaces and separate areas of activity which are currently creating potential conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles as well as staff and customers. Ultimately the purpose of the improvements will deliver health and safety and highways safety improvements on site.
- 5.29 The Transport Statement submitted as part of this application confirms that on balance the proposals will contribute to improved highways safety.
- 5.30 The proposals are therefore in accordance with UDP Policy GDP1 which requires development to 'ensure safe and convenient pedestrian and vehicle access to and from a

site' and Policy S6 which states that small shopping developments should be permitted where 'the development is safely accessible for customers on foot'.

- 5.31 Vehicle access to the site will not change but will be better managed through the proposals.

Sustainability and Parking

- 5.32 In terms of sustainability the proposals are consistent with UDP Policies PS4 which promotes the use of sustainable travel, would help to reduce the overall need to travel and encourage the use of alternatives to the car, and is also consistent with PPW Paragraph 4.6.4 which states that local planning authorities should assess the extent to which new development is consistent with minimising the need to travel and increasing accessibility by modes other than the private car.
- 5.33 The proposals will contribute to the Well-being of Future Generations Act goals, in particular PPW Paragraph 4.3.1 and 7.1.3 which promote decisions that support development which minimise the demand for travel, especially by private car.
- 5.34 Located in a sustainable residential location with good access to public transport the Co-op store is able to serve the day to day local needs of the community. Around 37% of customers live within 500m of the store, 22% live within 1km and 25% within 2km. 84% of customers therefore live within 2km of the store. The proposed improvements would enable the store to continue to serve the needs of local population and potentially increase local trips and minimise the need for customers to travel a distance to other locations.
- 5.35 Trends in community shopping have changed in recent years. The rise in multi-trip convenience shopping has been researched and assessed in the 2015 Co-operative Group Convenience Report (*'Back to the Future: 50 Years of Convenience Retailing'*). The average shopper in 2015 now visits their local supermarket on average 3.8 times a week, making multiple trips for smaller numbers of items – an average of 3.5 items each trip. On average, 61% of all shoppers who visit convenience stores make their journey on foot (the Co-operative Group, 2015). These trends and the accessible location of the store, together with its small-scale format, reduce the need to provide on-site car parking.
- 5.36 Parking is fundamentally linked to promoting sustainability. Co-operative Food stores are small local convenience stores which cater for the local community and their day to day needs. Customers typically make short trips to the store of less than 10 minutes and the customer base is largely those within walking distance (as described above). To this end, many Co-op stores have no car parking. For stores where car parking is provided and can cater for passing-trade, visits by vehicle are in reality self-regulating. That is to say, that

customers travelling by car choose not to visit a store when they know it's likely to be busy and on approach do not stop if the car park is visibly full.

- 5.37 The proposals at Rhostyllen include the removal of 2 parking spaces, the rationalisation of the storage and parking area and the provision of 3 new cycle stands. This is consistent with national and local planning policy which, as illustrated above, promotes sustainable modes of transport and reducing the reliance on the private car as a mode of transport.
- 5.38 The Highways Officer has raised concerns over the loss of 2 parking spaces on site. A Parking survey has been undertaken at the Rhostyllen store and the Transport Statement should be referred to for further details.
- 5.39 To summarise, the evidence illustrates that during the vast majority of a typical trading day the number of spaces proposed once the proposed works has been completed will be more than sufficient to accommodate the demand from the existing customer base. Furthermore, an overall improvement will also be achieved in highway safety terms through the rationalisation of the external storage and car parking area.
- 5.40 The proposals are therefore consistent with national and local transport planning policies. UDP Policy T8 requires new development to provide vehicle parking spaces in accordance with the Council's parking standards. Special circumstances apply including the availability of public transport nearby, which this store is well catered for.
- 5.41 The proposals are in accordance with PPW Chapter 8 Transport which places an emphasis on minimising the need to travel and goes on to state in Paragraph 8.4.2 that 'Car parking provision is a major influence in the choice and means of transport and pattern of development. Local authorities should ensure that new developments provide lower levels of parking than have generally been achieved in the past. Minimum parking standards are no longer appropriate.'
- 5.42 Consistent with the PPW the Wrexham Local Planning Guidance Note No.16 (2011) referred to in UDP Policy T8 is guidance only and establishes maximum parking standards, which as PPW Paragraph 8.4.2 states is no longer appropriate. The Local Planning Guidance Note states that 'Where developments are close to local services and facilities and/or are in areas where people are able to walk or cycle to them or travel to them easily by public transport, it may be appropriate for less on site parking to be provided.'
- 5.43 As this Planning Statement and the Transport Statement illustrate, the Co-op site meets with these criteria, is compliant with local and national policy and the maximum standard levels does not apply in this instance.

- 5.44 In addition, the proposals include the provision of 3 new cycle stands which will further contribute to promoting sustainable modes of travel.

Neighbour Amenity

- 5.45 The proposal comprises the erection of a single storey pitched roof storage unit and external improvements to car parking and storage areas.
- 5.46 The scale and appearance of the building has been designed to be in keeping with the residential scale and character of neighbouring garages and the existing Co-op store and is therefore consistent with UDP Policy GDP1.
- 5.47 The proposals have taken account of personal and community safety and security in the design and layout of the development. Once the works are complete the proposals will enhance the existing circulation and movement of pedestrians and vehicles.
- 5.48 The proposals do not include any additional noise omissions and there are no trees or soft landscaping which will be affected by the proposed scheme. The development will benefit from natural surveillance. The proposals have been designed to be inclusive and in accordance with the relevant DDA and building regulations.

6.0 Summary and Conclusion

- 6.1 Planning permission is sought for the erection of a storage building and associated external improvements to the parking and storage area of an existing Co-op store at Rhostyllen, Wrexham.
- 6.2 The development floor space totals 24 sqm. The parking area will be reconfigured and a disabled space re-provided on the western edge of the main car park. 3 new cycle stands will be provided. The proposals, once complete, will enable the Co-op to undertake internal refit improvements in due course.
- 6.3 This Planning Statement sets out the national and local planning policies relevant to this application. Consideration has been given to the principle of development and the planning considerations associated with the proposal including convenience and community facilities, highways and access, sustainability and parking and neighbour amenity. The proposals comply with the objectives of those policies.
- 6.4 The proposals will be located on an existing development site comprising a small Co-op convenience store of around 248 sqm. There will be no increase in net floor space.
- 6.5 The proposals seek to enhance the vitality and viability of this important local community facility which includes a post office and ATM in addition to the convenience retail element. The proposals will enable the Co-op to improve the health and safety, highways safety and environmental health management of the store. These improvements are fundamental to the store's operational and trading future and to mitigating the associated risks of not undertaking the proposed improvements, which have been highlighted throughout this Statement.
- 5.49 A parking survey has been undertaken and Transport Statement submitted. The evidence illustrates that during the vast majority of a typical trading day the number of spaces proposed once the proposed works has been completed will be more than sufficient to accommodate the demand from the existing customer base. Furthermore, an overall improvement will also be achieved in highway safety terms through the rationalisation of the external storage and car parking area.
- 6.6 Taking into account all of the submitted material and evidence, and when considering the overall planning balance, the highway safety benefits that would be delivered through the rationalisation of the storage and car parking areas and securing improvements to a valued community asset outweigh the limited degree of harm that the loss of 2 parking spaces would incur when considering the sustainable credentials of this site.

- 6.7 The development thus complies with the relevant national and local planning policies and planning permission should be granted without delay.

Appendix A

Drawing ref: 7845.08 P(000)01 RevA

Co-op Store, Rhostyllen, Wrexham

Planning Statement

on behalf of

Co-operative Group

December 2016

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