

## Wigan Council

**Report to Planning Committee**

**23rd June 2009**

**Application No:** A/08/72286 (Video)

**Speaking arrangements:**

Minor/Householder development. One speaker against for two minutes One speaker in favour for two minutes

**Applicant:** Great Central Development Ltd

**Development Proposed:** To erect 4 no. retail units for A1, A2, A3 and A4 use, ramped access, installation of an ATM and associated parking and access.

**Location:** Land At Platt Street & Walthew Lane Platt Bridge

**Ward:** Abram

**Representations**

Councillor Smethurst has requested that the application be determined by Planning Committee.

**Site Description:**

The site is previously developed land located between Platt Street and Walthew Lane, adjacent to the main road roundabout serving Liverpool Road and Sherwood Crescent. The site lies within the Platt Bridge Local Centre, as defined in the Unitary Development Plan.

The site is generally flat and partly laid out as a car park with a macadam surface. It is bounded on three sides by public highways and there is a builders merchant to the south. To the west is a social club and there is a recreational area to the northwest across the main road. Commercial uses are located across Liverpool Road to the north together with the King William Public House. Terraced housing is located to the east in Templeton Road and there is an intervening tree planted grassed area to the west of these dwellings.

The main focal point of the local centre is located to the south of the site and is characterised by traditional two storey retail units with living accommodation above.

**Proposal:**

The application proposes the construction of a single storey building to house four retail units. The applicant has not specified a use for the units but has applied for A1 (Shops), A2 (Financial and Professional Services), A3 (Restaurants and cafes) and A4 (Drinking Establishments) uses. An ATM is also proposed. The retail units vary in size from 371.5 square metres in area to 71.9 square metres.

The proposed building will be located 1.6 metres from the southern boundary with Pooles Domestic Builders Yard. The structure will have a setback of 2 metres from the footpath running along Platt Street and 200mm from the footpath along Walthew Lane.

Due to an initial objection to the scheme by the Environment Agency, the applicant has altered the design of the original proposal to satisfy those concerns. As amended, the structure will sit on an elevated base approximately 1.7 metres above the level of the footpath. The building is rectangular in shape with a depth of 22 metres and a width of 34 metres. The building will have an angled roof, increasing towards the front facade giving a maximum height of 8.9 metres above the footpath.

Due to its elevated position, the building will be accessed from both Platt Street and Walthew Lane by way of a staircase. A ramped access and steps are proposed along the front elevation with access from the car park.

In terms of design, the front facade of the building will be constructed with a mixture of glazing and an oatmeal coloured rendered stone. A large area of signage is proposed over each shop unit, which will need to be agreed through a separate consent and is therefore only indicative. The side elevations along Platt Street and Walthew Lane will be constructed of a grey cladding with brickwork on the lower portion along the footpath.

To the front of the building will be a car park accommodating 19 vehicle spaces, two of which will be for disabled users and a cycle rack. A small number of trees and low level planting are proposed around the perimeter.

#### Supplementary Documents

Planning and Design and Access Statement  
Flood Risk Assessment

These documents are available for inspection by the Committee on request in the Environmental Services Department.

#### **Policy Context**

The subject site is allocated in the Replacement Unitary Development Plan as being within the Platt Bridge Local Centre.

#### **Relevant Policies/Guidance**

National Planning Policies:  
PPS 1 - Delivering Sustainable Development  
PPS 6 - Planning for Town Centres

Unitary Development Plan Policies:  
EV3A - Design of New Development  
EV3C - Design of Frontages to Shops and Commercial Premises  
EV3D - Landscaping of Development  
A1C - Access for All  
A1S - Parking in New Development

A1D - Walking  
S1D - Local Centres  
G1A - Impact of Development on Amenity  
G1C - Development and Flood Risk

Documents of Material Consideration:  
Platt Bridge Landscape Masterplan 2008

### **Previous Relevant Decisions:**

A/08/70462 - To erect one four storey block comprising 3 no. ground floor commercial units and 16 no. apartments, together with rooftop residents amenity space, and laying out of car park for commercial and residential use, cycle store and bin store. This application was approved under delegated powers on 20.03.2008.

### **Consultations:**

Engineering (Highways) - My Highways Engineer requested amendments to the original layout which have been satisfactorily revised, with the exception of providing an additional disabled persons parking space.

Environmental Protection - No objections to the scheme were raised, however, a number of conditions were recommended including (i) the insulation of plant and machinery and (ii) a restriction on opening hours, loading and unloading. A condition requesting details of an extraction system would also be required should an A3 use operate from the building.

United Utilities - No objections.

Environment Agency - The Agency originally objected to the proposal due to flood risk. However, with amendments to the finished floor level, the Agency has removed its objection, albeit with a number of conditions which will be outlined later in this report.

Greater Manchester Police - GMP noted numerous concerns in relation to the scheme including the layout of the site potentially contributing to loitering and anti-social behaviour and the need for provision of improved security for the operation and use of the ATM. These comments were forwarded to the applicant and some have been addressed.

### **Representations**

Councillor Smethurst has requested that the subject application be determined by Planning Committee as the application could have significant affects on the town centre in terms of the economy, environment and road traffic.

No comments were received from members of the public.

## Assessment

Principle of Development  
Design  
Amenity  
Flood Risk  
Highways and Traffic  
Observations on Representations Received

### Principle of Development

Urban regeneration and the re-use of previously developed land underpin the Government's planning and sustainability objectives as set out in Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development (PPS1).

Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres (PPS6) supports the development of retail and commercial outlets within defined town and local centres as a first choice location, over either edge of centre or out of town locations. In overall terms, this provides support for the proposal as it would meet the Government's general objectives for local centre development. An appropriate retail led scheme would serve to promote and enhance the township by focusing development in an accessible location and providing a wider range of uses for residents. Policy S1D follows on from PPS6 and notes that within local centres, the development of shops, food and drink outlets, financial and professional services and community and cultural facilities will be permitted provided a number of requirements are met.

### Design

PPS1 notes that good design should ensure attractive usable, durable and adaptable places and that planning authorities should plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes. It goes on to note that places should function well and add to the overall character and quality of the area, not just for the short term, but over the lifetime of the development.

With specific regard to the subject site, Policy EV3A notes that all proposals for development will be required, through their design, to promote the character and identity of places. Policy S1D also emphasises the need for development to be of a scale and character appropriate to the size, role and function of the centre.

Fundamental to the assessment of this application is the layout of the site and the built form which is proposed. The land is located between a number of key strategic and local routes and as such, forms a very visible and prominent site when entering or leaving Platt Bridge. The site is situated close to the gateway points indicated on the Platt Bridge Landscape Masterplan 2008 where it is proposed to emphasise the entrance and exit points to the local centre, creating a distinctive gateway with a strong identity and sense of place. The previously approved development on the site (A/08/70462) was four storeys in height and fronted the roundabout at the northern end of the site. The building was a distinctive structure to mark the gateway and also had a positive relationship with the street, providing an active frontage and incorporating visual interest.

On the present proposal and in contrast to the above, the northern portion of the site which fronts the roundabout is taken up by a large area of car park and therefore becomes the main focal point which dominates the streetscene to the detriment of the character and appearance of the area in general. The perimeter landscaping would do little to mitigate this impact. The proposed retail building is set to the southern end of the site with its main frontage facing onto the parking area. This arrangement produces a building which is introverted into the site and one which is overwhelmingly orientated towards customers arriving by car. Given the position of the site in a Local Centre, it would be particularly desirable to create an active street frontage with shop fronts of a more traditional scale and character. Both Platt Street and Walthew Lane are presented with a large blank mass of cladding to the footpath creating a particularly oppressive environment for pedestrians. The proposal fails to take the opportunity to enliven the streetscape or to improve the pedestrian environment of Platt Bridge Local Centre contrary to Policy A1D of the UDP.

The retail units themselves are of low aesthetic and architectural merit with cladding on the southern and eastern elevations and a rendered finish on the northern and western sides. The front facade of the building is approximately 8.9 metres in height which includes a large area designated for advertising between the roof and windows, a design which is more commonly found in a retail park rather than a traditional local centre. The combination of the proposed height, layout and materials create a structure which is uncharacteristic and unsympathetic to the area and the local function of Platt Bridge centre. The majority of built form in the centre is of a traditional style, being constructed of brick and tile. An interesting modern design could be acceptable in this location but given the plain functional design proposed, I have significant concerns over the development and consider it will appear as an inappropriate and incongruous feature in the locality.

It is acknowledged that the proposed floor level of the building has been increased at the request of the Environment Agency in order to protect the structure and its users from potential flooding. However, even without the building being set on a plinth, it would still have an unacceptable relationship with the streetscape and the pedestrian environment.

Greater Manchester Police have also raised concerns in relation to the service alley which runs behind the building as a potential area for anti-social behaviour to occur.

The applicant has argued that the previously approved scheme does not meet operator requirements and is unlikely to be built. In addition, the applicant has noted that at the current time the application raises concerns which need to be balanced with regard to the proposed investment and the impacts on Platt Bridge. Whilst recognising the financial constraints of the present time, this is not considered to be a valid reason to compromise on the quality of the proposed design or the impact which the building will have on the surrounding area. The legacy of the subject proposal will continue for many years, and if approved, would represent a missed opportunity to achieve a development which is of long term benefit to Platt Bridge.

Given the above and on balance, I find that the proposal is an unacceptable form of development for Platt Bridge. I have significant concerns not only over the bland and unimaginative design proposed, but also over the siting of the retail unit itself on this prominent gateway site contrary to the principles of Policy EV3A, A1D and S1D of the Council's Unitary Development Plan. In addition, the proposal is considered to be contrary to PPS1 which notes 'Design which is inappropriate in its context, or which fails to take the

opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, should not be accepted'.

### Amenity

Policy G1A of the UDP states that new development will be permitted provided that there is no adverse impact on the amenity of nearby land uses. The proposed use would require regular deliveries from large vehicles and it is also likely that extractor fans would be required should an A3 use occupy any of the units. A variety of plant is proposed in the roof space for air conditioning etc.

As noted above, my Environmental Protection Officer has suggested a number of conditions to minimise any potential amenity impacts on the area. Taking into account those conditions and the significant distance from residential properties, I am satisfied that the proposal would not result in any significant loss of amenity for neighbours.

### Flood Risk

The site is located with Flood Risk Zones 2 and 3. The application and subsequent amendments have been referred to the Environment Agency for comment.

After an initial objection to the scheme, the Agency is now supportive of the proposal, albeit with a number of conditions aimed at reducing flood risk. These include limiting surface water run-off, the provision of attenuation flood storage and the identification and provision of safe routes into and out of the site. A number of pre-commencement conditions have also been recommended including a finished floor level set at a minimum of 28.7m AOD and the submission of a detailed drainage design.

The applicant has proposed a finished floor level of 28.7m AOD (resulting in the plinth design) which is consistent with the requirements of the Agency. The other conditions could be imposed as part of any approval. On this basis, I am satisfied that the proposal would not be subject to an unacceptable risk of flooding and as such is consistent with Policy G1C of the UDP.

### Highways

As noted above, the subject site is located within a local centre and as such can be accessed by a range of sustainable transport options. The proposal includes the provision for 19 car parking spaces two of which are for disabled persons. A cycle rack is also indicated on submitted plans.

My Highways Engineer raised concerns regarding access into the site, however, this has since been amended and is now acceptable. Although notified of the requirement, the applicant has failed to provide three disabled persons car parking spaces, however, this could be satisfied by condition should the proposal be approved.

Subject to the above, the provision of 19 spaces to serve four retail units in a Local Centre is deemed to be appropriate.

## Observations on Representations Received

No representations have been received.

### **Conclusion:**

Although the subject proposal seeks to re-use a vacant area of land in Platt Bridge Local Centre, I have serious concerns in relation to the design and integration of the building into the surrounding streetscape.

This site represents an opportunity to enliven this area of Platt Bridge and to introduce a standard of architecture and design which can act as a catalyst for future regeneration, similar to that already approved on the site through a previous application. Although amendments to the design have been requested, the applicant has failed to create a building which will enliven the streetscape or act as a landmark at this prominent entry point into the Local Centre. Conversely, what is proposed creates blank and uninteresting facades along both Walthew Lane and Platt Street with a building more suited to an out of town retail park than a Local Centre.

The proposal is clearly not of a character or scale appropriate for Platt Bridge and is contrary to EV3A, A1D and S1D of the UDP. The proposal also conflicts with the principles of PPS1, which notes that substandard design, which would represent a missed opportunity, should not be accepted.

### **Recommendation**

Refused

### **Reasons:**

1. The proposed building by virtue of its siting, design and height would result in the creation of a bland and unimaginative development dominated by surface car parking, which would have a poor relationship with the streetscape and the pedestrian environment. The building would be of a scale and character which is inappropriate for Platt Bridge Local Centre and which would result in a visually obtrusive and unsympathetic feature in the streetscene, providing inactive frontages to Platt Street and Walthew Lane. Consequently, the proposal is contrary to the objectives of Policies EV3A, A1D and S1D of the Replacement Wigan Unitary Development Plan and the principles of good design as set out in PPS1.

This decision is based on the following plans (P) 100 Rev G; (P)103 Rev C and (P)201 Rev G received on 20.04.2009.

### **Plans Attached to Report**

Location Plan

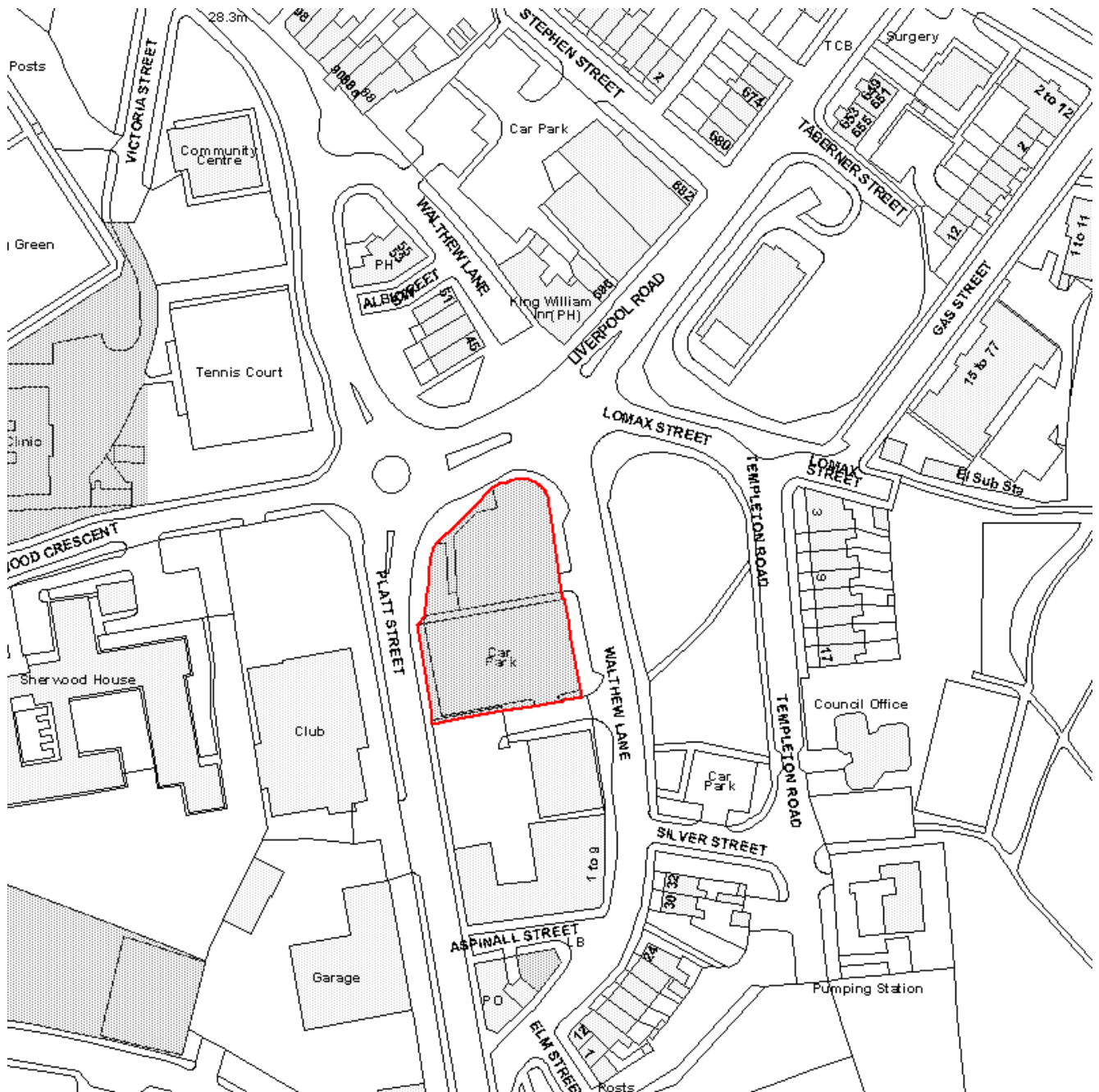
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Site Area 



This plan is representative only, to indicate the site in relation to its surroundings.