

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL
PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE –27 SEPTEMBER 2007
REPORT OF THE CHIEF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER

S6/2007/1143/FP

ALTERATIONS TO THE SOUTHEAST EXTERNAL ELEVATION, ERECTION OF A
SMALL GROUND FLOOR EXTENSION AND NEW ENTRANCE FEATURE IN
CONNECTION WITH THE OCCUPATION OF THE PREMISES AS A DUAL
FRANCHISE AT W WATERS & SONS LTD, COMET WAY, HARPSFIELD
BROADWAY, HATFIELD

APPLICANT: WATERS RETAIL LTD

(Hatfield North)

1 Site Description

- 1.1 The application site is located on the northwest side of Comet Way in Hatfield and directly backs onto the Hatfield Aerodrome redevelopment site. The site has an area of approximately 0.472 hectares and has a large open frontage of approximately 80m onto Comet Way. The south east fenced boundary adjoins the premises of the fast food chain Kentucky Fried Chicken and to the southwest of the site is the parade of shops known as Harpsfield Broadway.
- 1.2 The current site is occupied by Peugeot which has a showroom and after-sales facility. Vehicular access is from Comet Way with parking for sales located mainly to the front of the site and service parking to the rear. A 'T' shaped building is located on the southwest boundary and comprises of a single storey showroom which projects forward towards the front boundary with full height glazing below a flat roofed steel clad structure. To the rear and side of this accommodation is the car servicing areas, workshops and stores. In the central section of the building is a smaller first floor area of accommodation for offices and meeting rooms.

2 The Proposal

- 2.1 The application seeks full planning permission in regards to changes to the current design and layout of the premises to allow the business to operate as a dual franchise (Renault and Peugeot) rather than the current the single one of Peugeot. These changes require the existing showroom to be enlarged by removing some of the office space and a reduction of the parts store. Also the area under the front projecting roof is to be in-filled to create approximately 23sqm additional showroom floor space in this area to the existing approximately 250sqm. In this new show room area, the Renault showroom will have approximately 200sqm and Peugeot 190 sqm. The new glazed wall in this location will also provide a new entrance for the Peugeot showroom and the existing entrance will become the Renault showroom entrance. No changes are proposed to the workshops areas.

- 2.2 The elevations of the showroom buildings are to be changed to have blue cladding to the fascia for the Peugeot showroom and white for the Renault one. The drawings indicate new signage on this fascia, however, this does not form part of this full planning application as this requires separate Advertisement Consent.
- 2.3 In regards to the site layout, the existing two vehicular entrances onto Comet Way are to be retained. Changes are proposed to the configuration of the parking areas and the usage, but the overall number will remain around the same. To the rear of the site the existing 43 service parking spaces are to be increased to 51 spaces. The existing 13 customer parking spaces to the front of the site are to be increased to 22 spaces. The other changes relate to car spaces for used cars and demonstration cars which currently consist of 72 parking spaces respectively. The proposal is to reduce these to 65 to be shared between Peugeot and Renault.

3 Planning History

Recent planning history includes:

- 3.1 S6/2005/1578/FP – Extension of building to provide valet bays and boundary fence – granted 15/02/06
- 3.2 S6/1997/0874/FP – Installation of 1.0m. diameter satellite antenna –granted 24/11/97
- 3.3 S6/1986/931/FP – Renewal of temporary consent for MOT bay – granted 13/02/86
- 3.4 S6/1983/528/FP - New showroom and alterations to existing showrooms/offices – granted 1/9/83

4 Planning Policy

4.1 National Planning Policy

PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development
 PPG4 – Industrial, commercial development and small firms
 PPG13 – Transport

4.2 Hertfordshire Structure Plan 1991-2001:

Policy 29 – Car Parking

4.3 Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005

Policy SD1 – Sustainable Development
 Policy D1 – Quality of Design
 Policy D9 – Access and Design for People with disabilities
 Policy EMP4 – Car Sales and Showrooms
 Policy EMP 8 – Employment SITES Outside of Employment Areas
 Policy M6 – Cycle Routes and Facilities
 Policy M14 – Parking Standards for New Development

4.4 Supplementary Planning Guidance – Parking Standards

5 Representations Received

- 5.1 The application has been advertised by means of a site notice and by neighbour notification letters. No representations have been received apart from Welwyn Hatfield Access Group who requested that the proposal is considered subject to the standards and criteria outlined in the District Plan in regards to detailed access requirements.
- 5.2 **Hatfield Town Council** – object for the following reasons: *‘The Committee objected to the application considering the lack of additional parking the sole reason for not supporting the proposals with so few additional spaces being provided the committee expressed concern that surrounding roads would be used and cause real problems’*

6 Consultations

- 6.1 **Highways Authority** - does not wish to restrict the grant of permission subject to a planning condition requiring the turning space to be provided for the car transporters to be completed prior to occupation and retained thereafter.

7 Discussion

- 7.1 This application is being referred to the Planning Control Committee as an objection has been received from Hatfield Town Council.
- 7.2 The main issues to be considered in the determination of this application are:
- 1) The principle of continued use and expansion of car showrooms in this location
 - 2) Scale of development
 - 3) The impact on the amenity of adjoining residents
 - 4) Highway and Parking Issues
 - 5) Design Issues
 - 6) Other Matters

1) The principle of continued use and expansion of car showrooms in this location

- 7.3 The use of the application site has been linked for over 20 years in connection with car sales and showrooms and so is a well established business. The proposal is to enlarge the current showroom area, within the existing building envelope to provide sufficient space for 2 franchises to operate.
- 7.4 The established use of the site for this operation is particularly relevant, as the site is not located in a designated employment area where Policy EMP4 (Car Sales and Showrooms) normally requires new development of this nature to be located. The main issue is, therefore, whether the continued use of this site for these activities would be contrary to any local plan policies.
- 7.5 There is no evidence to show that the proposal would have any harmful impact on the availability of employment land elsewhere in the locality nor would it undermine the over-arching objectives of Policy EMP4. The proposal would

however still need to comply with the requirements of Policy EMP 8 which is for Employment Sites outside of Employment Areas.

7.6 EMP8 sets out the following 3 criteria which all have to be met:

- (i) The development would be of a similar scale to the existing activities on the site
- (ii) The development would not have any adverse effects on the residential amenities of any nearby properties
- (iii) The development would provide adequate parking, servicing and access arrangements and would not have an adverse impact on the highway network, including highway safety.

Each of these will be discussed in turn below.

2) Scale of development

7.7 The proposed changes as previously mentioned would not result in any new buildings being constructed as the alterations would take place within the existing structures and involve minor changes to the elevation treatment. There are no changes proposed to the existing workshops or MOT testing bays, both of which will be shared by the proposed new dual franchise.

7.8 The main changes relate to an increase in showroom area of approximately 170sqm and an increase in employees from 30 people to approximately 35. The new showroom area of 390sqm is only 30sqm larger than that already granted by application S6/2005/1578/FP and which is still extant but the permission has not been implemented. This is a material planning consideration, and therefore the proposed increase of approximately 30 sqm is not a significant increase within the context of the existing permission. The increase in employees by 5 will provide additional employment opportunities, possibly for local residents and should therefore be supported.

3) The Impact on the amenity of adjoining residents

7.9 The nearest residential properties are those above the retail units along Harpsfield Broadway to the south of the site and the proposed new residential units in the Hatfield Aerodrome site towards the west of the site. Both these locations are however separated by roads from the application site and with this separation distance and the type of activities associated with the proposal, there is likely to be no undue harm to these residential sites.

4) Highway and Parking Issues

7.10 The Highways Authority have advised that subject to a planning condition requiring the provision of the turning space for car transporters is provided prior to occupation there is no objection to the proposal.

7.11 In regards to parking provision, Policy M14 and the accompanying Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) – Parking Standards are relevant. The SPG advises that for Showroom car sales that the maximum car parking standards required are 3 spaces per 4 employees plus 1 space per 10 cars displayed. The number of cars on display, however, is being reduced from 72 to 65 in the current scheme and so no additional parking provision is required for

this part of the proposal. In regards to the number of employees there is an increase of approximately 5, however, the submitted layout drawing does not indicate that any new spaces are being allocated for employee parking to accommodate this increase.

- 7.12 The current site operates with 30 employees according to the application and does not allocate any specific employee parking. It would be reasonable to expect under the current parking requirements that 4 parking spaces should be provided solely for the use of employees. The application indicates that the site is accessible by public transport which enables staff to be recruited from the local area to use public transport and that additional parking for five bicycles will be provided. Notwithstanding this, the guidance in the Supplementary Planning Guidance still requires 3 spaces per 4 employees and in this location, particularly in a location like this where there is limited parking provision in the immediate surrounding area.
- 7.13 In summary, it would be reasonable to impose a planning condition requiring the maximum standard allocating 4 parking spaces for the sole use of employees and the construction of a covered parking store for 5 cycles to ensure that the increase of employees does not result in an overspill of parking onto the adjoining highways which could impact on the free movement of traffic.
- 7.14 Subject to the above planning conditions, the proposal satisfies the 3 criteria given in Policy EMP8 and so complies with the requirements of this Policy.

5) Design Issues

- 7.15 Policy D1 is relevant for the quality of the design proposals. The proposed changes to the external appearance of the building relate to changes relating to the cladding and entrance doorways to the individual franchises. These are considered to be in keeping with the character of the existing building. In regards to the parking layout, this is logically laid out, with customer parking to the front. In summary the proposal complies with the design requirements subject to a planning condition requiring the submission of samples.

6) Other Matters

- 7.16 Three disabled parking spaces have been provided which are located to towards the main entrance and this is considered to comply with Policy D9.

8 Conclusion

- 8.1 This is an existing employment site which is occupied by a small business which provides local employment and services for residents. Its location near some public transport links and housing both contribute to the aims of sustainable development with the reduced need for travel. It is important, therefore, that these types of site remain in employment use, unless for example it is seen to be detrimental to residential amenity and traffic generation.
- 8.2 The established use of the site will continue unaltered by this proposal, however, there is some increase in the showroom floor area and the number of employees will increase by approximately 5. This increase in showroom area can be accommodated within the existing buildings and would not result in any harm to the amenity of adjoining residential neighbours. Concerns have been raised about the level of parking provision and there is justification that specific parking

should be allocated for the additional employees. This was not a requirement of the previous application as the increase in showroom area resulted in no new employees, but this proposal is different and the requirement can therefore be substantiated.

- 8.3 To conclude, the proposal complies with Policy EMP8 and also the parking requirements of Policy M14 subject to the provision of additional employee parking and cycle stores.

9 Recommendation

- 9.1 It is recommended that application S6/2007/1143/FP be approved subject to the following conditions:

1. C.2. 1 – Time Limit for Commencement of Development.
2. C.5.1 – Samples of materials to be submitted.
3. C.8.20 – Cycle Parking Provision.
4. Notwithstanding the details shown on approved drawing No R29389/100 Rev C (received and date stamped 31/07/07) an amended parking layout plan to an appropriate scale shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority showing the provision of 4 parking spaces for the sole use of employees. These spaces shall be marked out on site and also clearly annotated for this use and shall be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to first occupation of the new showrooms hereby permitted and shall remain in that form thereafter.

REASON: To ensure a satisfactory level of parking provision is provided to ensure that there is no overspill of parking onto the local highway network and to accord with the requirements of Policy M14 and the Supplementary Planning Guidance – Parking Standards.

5. No part of the development hereby approved shall be occupied until vehicular turning space has been provided within the curtilage of the site. The turning space shall permit the entry of both domestic and service motor vehicles including car transporters in forward gear and shall be retained in that form thereafter.

REASON: To ensure the proposal does not result in a detrimental impact on the safe and efficient operation of the highway in accordance with Policy 29 of the Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991-2011.

INFORMATIVES

A separate application for Advertisement Consent is required for the signs shown on the submitted drawings.

SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE GRANT OF PERMISSION:

The proposal has been considered against National Planning Policy Guidance PPS1, PPG4 & PPG13 and development plan policy 29 of the Hertfordshire Structure Plan

Review 1991 – 2011 and development plan policies SD1, D1, EMP4, EMP8, M6 & M14 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005), in addition to the Human Rights Act 1998, which indicate that the proposal should be approved. Material planning considerations do not justify a decision contrary to the Development Plan.

Chris Conway, Chief Planning and Environmental Health Officer
Date 13/09/07

Background papers to be listed S6/2005/1578/FP

