

# JWPlanning

## Planning Consultancy Services

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6 July 2015

Ms Jo Draper - Development and Building Control Team  
Monmouthshire County Council  
Planning Section  
County Hall  
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Dear Jo

### **Proposed Retail and Commercial Development comprising four units at Rockfield Road, Monmouth Planning Application DC/2014/01065**

You have asked us to provide in letter-form our comments made, following your email of 6 May.

#### **Is there a need for a new local/neighbourhood centre in this area? Is the proposed site acceptable under 'sequential approach' requirements?**

1. The application proposal is 'out of centre' and therefore *prima facie* is inconsistent with LDP Policies S6 and RET4. However, the need / justification for local / neighbourhood shopping facilities to serve the Rockfield Estate has previously been recognised by the Council through identification of a site for local retail and community facilities at Chartist Rise. This site was never been brought forward, for reasons that I am not fully aware of, and the allocation no longer features in the current approved Local Development Plan.
2. Despite the difficulties of the Chartist Rise site, we have presumed that the Council is not resiling from its position that there is a justification for local retail and community facilities in this area. The justification for local facilities on this side of the town must be strengthened by the more recent allocation of 450 houses plus employment uses at Wonastow Road (Policy SAH4). However, although the application site is reasonably located in relation to much of the existing residential development within the Rockfield Estate / Over Monnow area, it is not well located in relation to the proposed new housing areas to the west (SAH4).
3. Monmouth contains three outlying residential areas at Wonastow / Over Monnow, Osbaston, and Wyesham. We are not aware of their actual populations, but Wonastow / Over Monnow appears to be the largest of these areas, and of scale sufficient to justify the provision of local/neighbourhood facilities. If this 'need' is accepted (as the Council has done in the past) and there is no better site that can be identified in the Wonastow / Over Monnow area, this in itself answers sequential approach requirements.

## Is the Proposal of an Appropriate Scale?

4. We stated in our letter / report of 14 November 2014 that we believed that a store of 372 sq.m gross was of an appropriate scale for a local facility as proposed.
5. You have raised the question of the appropriate scale and content of the development in relation to the proposed additional small units. As far as LDP policy is concerned the issue of appropriate scale of centres is not particularly clear. LDP Policy S6 'Retail Hierarchy' appears to be somewhat inconsistent in its classification of 'Local Centres' and 'Neighbourhood Centres/Shops'. As I recall, Hillcrest Road, Rather Avenue, and The Mardy in Abergavenny each consist of one shop only, but are classified as 'Local Centres'; whereas the larger centre at Bulwark containing a multiple foodstore and small units has the lower order classification of 'Neighbourhood Centre/Shops'.
6. We believe it unlikely that there would be much market demand for A1 retail uses in the small units, particularly as products such as newspapers, magazines, confectionery and soft drinks would be available from the foodstore. A chemist or florist seems unlikely. The most likely occupants are services such as hot food takeaway and ladies hairstylist. Furthermore, there is some merit in these facilities being provided locally, particularly hot food takeaways.
7. We appreciate your concerns in respect of additional food retail. It may be that the amount of convenience retail should be subject of condition, perhaps restricting it to the floorspace of the large unit only, so as to ensure that the small units are not subsumed into the retail area of the foodstore and remain occupied separately for services / community facilities.

Please speak with me if there are any points that you would like to discuss arising from this letter.

Yours sincerely

**James Williams**  
**JWPlanning**