

**Proposed mixed re-development of site at Aldershot Bus Station, 3 Station Road, Aldershot : Planning Application 22/00022/FULPP**

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek authorisation from the Committee for the removal of the condition precluding redevelopment of the former Aldershot Bus Station site until alternative bus connection provision has been provided in the vicinity of Aldershot Railway Station. This change is necessary due to a change in circumstances since the decision to grant planning permission the Development Management Committee on 5 December 2018 (subsequently renewed with a resolution of the Committee to grant permission for a second planning application on 17 August 2022).

## **2. Background**

2.1 Aldershot Bus Station is adjacent to the west side of the forecourt of Aldershot Railway Station. The application site has a roughly oval shape and measures 0.24 hectares. It is entirely hard-surfaced and enclosed to the north, west and south sides by brick walls, where the site abuts the grounds of residential flats at Ascot Court. Vehicular access is from Station Road adjoining the "Field Gun" roundabout. The site includes a small building containing ancillary offices and public toilets. The majority of the site is used for bus manoeuvring and parking. It contains a number of bus stop bays perpendicular to the station forecourt, from which it is separated by a pedestrian pavement.

2.2 Planning permission was granted in January 2019 for *"Demolition of existing bus station and re-development of site with the erection of a mixed-use building comprising three ground floor commercial units with flexible use falling within Use Classes A1, A2, A3, A4, A5 or launderette (sui generis); and upper floor residential use (Use Class C3) comprising 32 market residential flats (18 X 1-bedroom, 12 X 2-bedroom & 2 X 3-bedroom units) with associated on-site servicing and parking areas"*, 16/00981/FULPP. This was subject to 28 conditions. No.28 stated:-

***"28. No development shall commence on site until alternative provision to the Bus Station for bus stopping and drop-off stops and facilities in the vicinity of Aldershot Railway Station has been provided and brought into use."***

The reason given for this condition was: *"At the request of the Highway Authority (Hampshire County Council) to ensure that adequate interconnectivity between bus services and other modes of transport is maintained"*.

This planning permission was subject to a 3 year implementation condition. By January 2022 this permission had lapsed.

2.3 A second application (22/00029/FULPP) was validated on 11 January 2022 for identical proposals, described as:

*“Demolition of existing bus station and re-development of site with the erection of a mixed use building comprising three ground floor commercial units with sub-divisible flexible use (Use Class E and sui generis; drinking establishment; Launderette, hot food takeaway); and upper floor residential use (Use Class C3) comprising 32 market residential flats (18 X 1-bedroom, 12 X 2-bedroom & 2 X 3-bedroom units) with associated on-site servicing and parking areas [re-submission of development approved with planning permission 16/00981/FULPP dated 26 February 2019]”*

2.2 The second application was considered by the Development Management Committee at the 17 August 2022 meeting. It was resolved to grant planning permission subject to a total of 29 conditions; and a s106 Planning Obligation to secure SPA and Public Open Space financial contributions, together with financial viability re-assessment clauses. The agreed conditions included No.29, to replicate the requirements of Condition No.28 of the 2019 planning permission:-

***“29. No development shall commence on site until alternative provision to the Bus Station for bus stopping and drop-off stops and facilities in the vicinity of Aldershot Railway Station has been provided and brought into use.”***

The reason for the imposition of this condition was: *“To ensure that adequate interconnectivity between bus services and other modes of transport is maintained.”*

2.3 Work on the s106 obligation stalled and the applicants put the site on the market after Stagecoach, the bus operator, vacated the site; they also voiced concerns about the ability to comply with the requirements of Condition No.29. As a result, the second planning application remains undetermined.

### **3. Planning considerations**

3.1 The objective behind the imposition of Condition No.28 on the original permission and its counterpart in the 2022 application was to ensure some form of connectivity between bus services and Aldershot Railway Station following the anticipated departure of Stagecoach from the Bus Station site. It was considered reasonable and appropriate to impose a ‘Grampian’-style condition of this nature because the Council were aware of proposals for the regeneration of the Aldershot Railway Station forecourt area adjacent to the application site incorporating bus-stopping facilities sufficient to satisfy the requirements of the planning condition.

3.2 However there have been significant delays in the design of the Station Forecourt regeneration scheme; and, over 4 years since the original permission was granted, a design has yet to be finalised and implemented. The franchise rail company operator for the adjacent railway lines changed, requiring re-engagement with entirely new rail company personnel. There was also significant disruption as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns; and consequent changes in the extent and pattern of use of public transport. Stagecoach has ceased to occupy the Bus Station site and now operates using only bus stops within Aldershot Town Centre. Finally, the design of the proposed Station Forecourt regeneration scheme has been significantly changed due to budget cuts and consequent cost engineering and the Station forecourt design is

understood to no longer incorporate bus stop provision. This reflects the reality that the local bus operator is content to operate without a bus station or terminus by using existing bus stops elsewhere with Aldershot Town Centre. Stagecoach or any other bus operator are not obliged to possess or use a bespoke bus station, terminus or specific bus stops and the Council is unable to require them to do so.

3.3 This is not the fault of the applicant; and they consequently do not have any ability to implement or influence the provision of alternative bus stopping facilities in the locality. The existing condition however presents an impediment which in current circumstances is considered unreasonable and fails the tests for acceptable conditions set out in the NPPF. The applicants' ability to implement their proposed development is prevented by a requirement that they are unable to comply with; that does not relate to the development the subject of the planning application; and would no longer serve any planning purpose.

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that **Condition No.29 be Deleted** from the conditions to be imposed in the event that planning application 22/00029/FULPP is to be determined pursuant to the Committee resolution of 14 August 2022.

**Tim Mills**

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**Background Papers:** Planning Application refs.16/00981/FULPP and 22/00029/FULPP.