

The information, recommendations and advice contained in this report are correct as at the date of preparation, which is more than two weeks in advance of the Committee meeting. Because of these time constraints some reports may have been prepared in advance of the final date given for consultee responses or neighbour comment. Any changes or necessary updates to the report will be made orally at the Committee meeting.

Case Officer	Katie Ingram
Application No.	19/00170/FULPP
Date Valid	18th March 2019
Expiry date of consultations	16th May 2019
Proposal	Change of Use from Use Class A1 (Retail) to Use Class D2 (Children's Soft Play Centre)
Address	<b>61 - 62 Wellington Centre - High Walk, Aldershot Hampshire GU11 1DB</b>
Ward	Wellington
Applicant	London And Cambridge Properties Limited
Agent	Ms Laura Wilkinson
Recommendation	<b>GRANT</b>

### Description

The application site is a shop unit on the High Walk level of the Wellington Centre in between WH Smith and New Look with an area of approximately 195sqm. It was previously occupied by a branch of Superdrug. At the time of the planning officer's site visit on 2 April 2019 the proposed use had commenced.

The application is seeking planning permission for a change of use from a retail unit (Use Class A1) to a children's soft play centre (Use Class D2). A supporting statement submitted with the application states that the premises has a maximum capacity of 50 children and 30 parents at one time and has proposed hours of operation of 9.00am to 5.30pm Monday to Saturdays and 10.00am to 4.00pm Sundays and public holidays. Equipment includes movable soft play equipment, a soft play climbing frame with a height of no more than 2.5m and a reception desk. There will be between 2 to 3 staff on site at one time.

A planning and marketing statement and indicative floor layout plan have been submitted with the application.

### Consultee Responses

Environmental Health	No objection
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RBC Property Services	No comments received
Planning Policy	On balance the proposal meets the policy objectives of the Aldershot Town Centre and Primary Shopping Frontages policies in the Local Plan and subject to satisfactory evidence of marketing and a restrictive use condition there is no objection
RBC Regeneration Team	No comments received

## **Neighbours notified**

In addition to posting a site notice and press advertisement, 29 individual letters of notification were sent to adjoining and nearby premises.

## **Neighbour comments**

No comments have been received as a result of the application publicity and notification.

## **Policy and determining issues**

The whole of the Wellington Centre is identified as being within the primary shopping frontage of Aldershot Town Centre where Policies SP1 (Aldershot Town Centre) and SP1.1 (Primary frontages in Aldershot Town Centre) of the Rushmoor Local Plan (2014-2032) are specifically relevant. Other relevant policies include SS2 (Spatial Strategy), IN1 (Infrastructure and Community Facilities), IN2 (Transport), DE1 (Design in the Built Environment) and DE8 (Indoor and Built Sport and Recreation Facilities).

Also relevant are the Council's adopted Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) "Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus" (2016), "Car and Cycle Parking Standards" (2017) and "Shopfront Design Guide" (2015).

The main determining issues are the principle of development, the impact on the appearance and character of the site and surrounding area, the impact on adjoining and nearby properties, parking and highways considerations and access for people with disabilities.

## **Commentary**

### **Principle of the development**

The site is located in the Primary Shopping Frontage as designated by Policy SP1.1 of the Rushmoor Local Plan which states that development in a primary shopping frontage will be permitted where:

- *It maintains and enhances the Centre's vitality and viability*
- *It is for a use falling within Class A1, A2, A3, A4 or A5 and retains an active frontage*
- *In each frontage a change of use from A1 will not result in the number of non-A1 units exceeding 30% unless the A1 use is considered to be no longer viable and there is evidence of effective marking for a period of at least 12 months*
- *It would not result in the loss of an A1 unit frontage on a visually prominent site*

The policy does not encompass any use outside classes A1, A2, A3, A4 or A5 in this location and the proposal is therefore contrary to the policy. A soft play centre falls within the D2 Use Class.

Whilst the proposal results in the loss of a retail unit the use creates an active frontage, attracts footfall for other retailers and enhances and maintains the viability and vitality of the town centre. The Council's Authority Monitoring Report identifies that, as of January 2019 the proportion of non-A1 uses and vacant uses in the Wellington Centre is 13%, with the whole of the High Walk in A1 use apart from the application site. A condition restricting the use to a Children's Soft Play Centre and no other use within the D2 Use Class, or A1 retail, could be imposed in the event of permission being granted.

It is considered that the proposal accords with the objectives of Policy SP1 (Aldershot Town Centre) and the Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus SPD to create a family-focused town centre with a robust retail core.

The unit has been marketed since 2015 when the previous tenants 'Superdrug' gave notice. The campaign comprised boards in the town centre and particulars posted on-line and brochures to local agents and retailers covering all market sectors. There has been one expression of interest in an A1 use where the prospective tenant reviewed the town centre and decided against setting up, even on advantageous terms. The marketing statement highlights problems of recent years due to changing market conditions and consumer demand patterns, and Aldershot suffering from the closing of 'Marks and Spencers' in Union Street and other well-known retailers leaving.

Paragraph 85 of the NPPF (2018) requires that local planning authorities promote the long-term viability of town centres by allowing them to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail industry. The issues relating to the traditional high street are well known particularly the significant increase in on-line sales and it is considered that this proposal, where the tenants are well known to the management company as they previously occupied a small area outside the former 'Mothercare', is an acceptable response to generate more demand in the other retail units.

On balance therefore, it is considered that the principle of the change of use in this location is acceptable. Whilst partly contrary to Policy SP1.1 (Primary Shopping Frontages) which restricts uses to A1-A5, the proposed use would maintain the vitality of the town centre and create an active frontage which would not threaten existing retail uses. Evidence has been submitted to demonstrate that the unit has been marketed to all market sectors since 2015. As the scheme is consistent with the overall policy objectives for the town centre evidenced in the relevant policies of the Rushmoor Local Plan and the Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus SPD and is consistent with the retail policy in the NPPF (2018), the development in this case is considered acceptable.

### **Impact on appearance and character of the site and surrounding area**

The fully glazed shop front, consistent with the other units in the Wellington Centre, has been retained and white PCV panels have been installed in the fascia sign area in order to cover up views of the suspended ceiling through the glazing. The soft play equipment has an acceptable visual impact. Signage comprising internal vinyl stickers does not require advertisement consent under the Town and Country Planning (Advertisement) Regulations as it is in enclosed

land. The proposal accords with Policy DE1 (Design in the Built Environment) of the Rushmoor Local Plan and the Shop Front Design Guide SPD.

### **Impact on amenities of adjoining and nearby properties**

The Council's Environmental Health Officer has reviewed the application and has no objection to the proposal based on the information submitted with the application. There are currently no residential uses within proximity of the unit or current or extant planning applications for nearby residential uses.

If noise issues were to arise, this would be a matter to be resolved by the centre management. In planning terms, it is considered that any effect is unlikely to have an unacceptable impact on neighbours.

### **Parking and highway safety**

The site is in an accessible town centre position served by public car parks. The proposed change of use is acceptable in highway terms. There is no requirement to increase the number of existing spaces for the change of use and impact on parking and highway safety is considered acceptable.

### **Access for people with disabilities**

This is a matter that would be given specific and detailed consideration under the Building Regulations. Nevertheless, the proposed play centre retains an existing fully accessible pedestrian entrance from the Wellington Centre mall.

### **Conclusion**

The proposed change of use is considered to be acceptable in principle, to have an acceptable visual impact upon the character and appearance of the area, is not considered to impact upon the amenities of the occupiers of adjoining and nearby properties and would have an acceptable impact on highways and parking. Adequate provision for people with disabilities would be made. The proposals are therefore considered acceptable having regard to Rushmoor Local Plan Policies SS2, SP1, SP1.1, DE1, DE8 and IN2, the relevant provisions of the NPPF (2018) and the Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus SPD and Shop Front Design Guide SPD.

### **Full Recommendation**

It is recommended that permission be GRANTED subject to the following conditions:

- 1 Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order, 1987, (or any other Order revoking or re-enacting that Order) the unit shall be used only for the purpose of a Children's Soft Play Centre or A1 Retail Use and for no other purpose, including any other purposes within Class D2..

Reason - To protect the viability and vitality of the Primary Shopping Frontage and Aldershot Town Centre, the amenities of neighbouring properties and to prevent adverse impact on traffic and parking conditions in the vicinity.

- 2 The permission hereby granted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved drawings - Drawing numbers:

Location Plan scale 1:1250

Floor Plan 16-04-05

Reason - To ensure the development is implemented in accordance with the permission granted

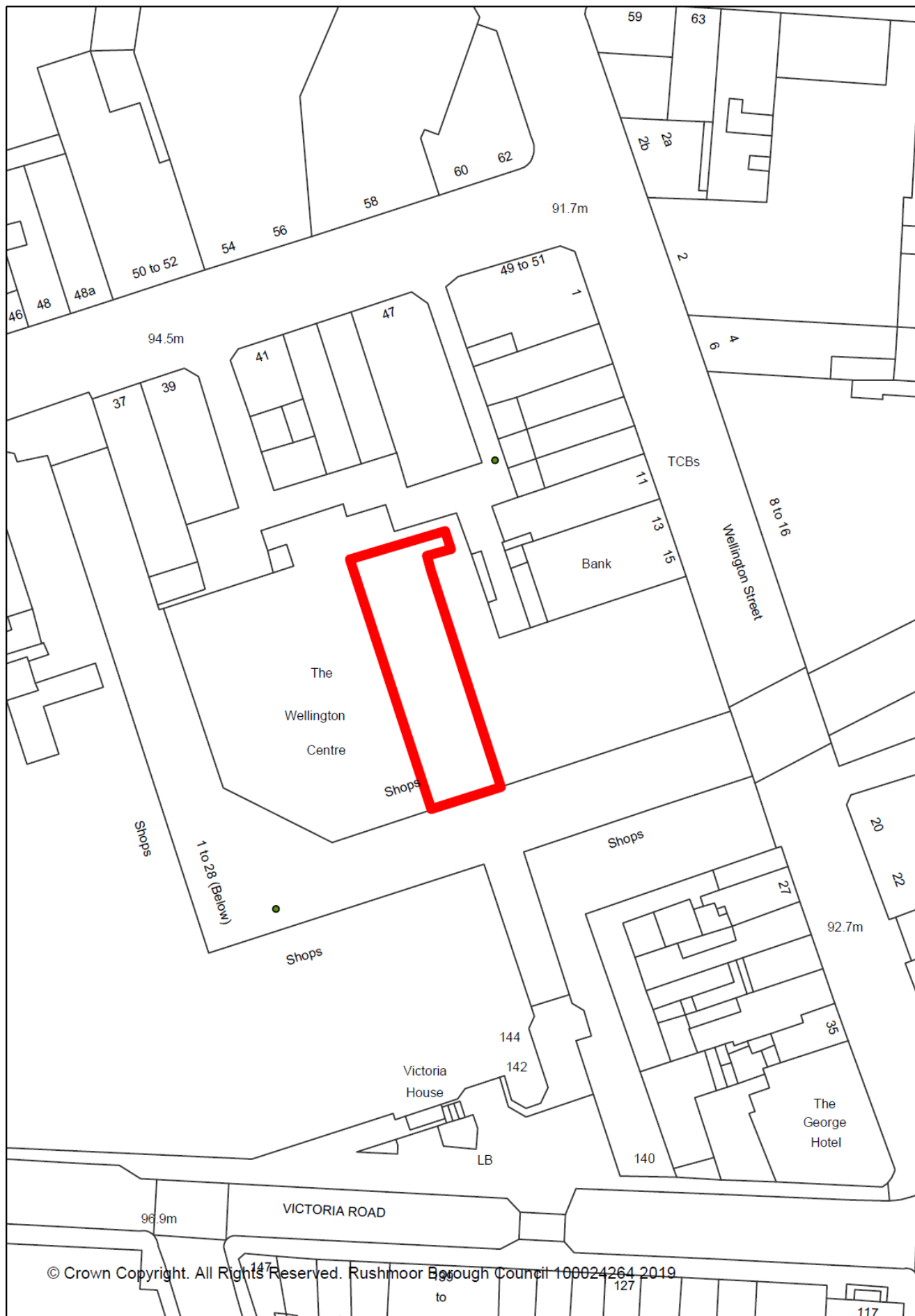
- 3 The premises shall not be used outside the following times:

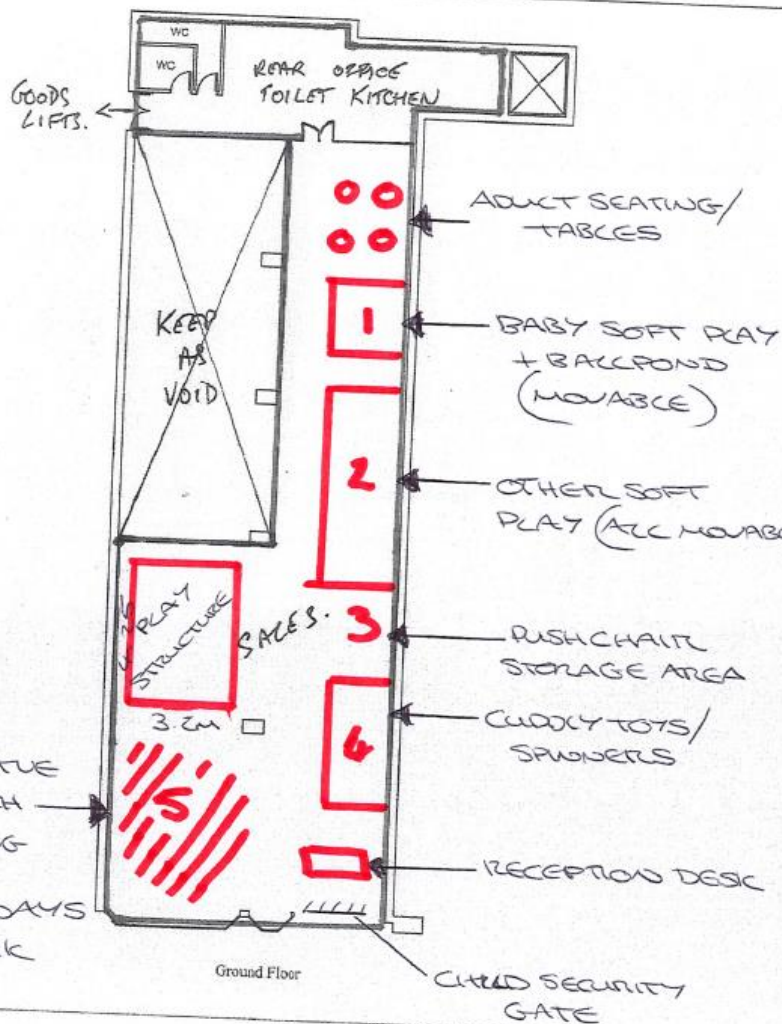
9.00am to 5.30pm Mondays to Saturdays, and  
10.00am to 4.00pm on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

Reason - To safeguard the amenities of neighbouring occupiers.

### **Informatives**

- 1 **INFORMATIVE** – The Local Planning Authority's commitment to working with the applicants in a positive and proactive way is demonstrated by its offer of pre-application discussion to all, and assistance in the validation and determination of applications through the provision of clear guidance regarding necessary supporting information or amendments both before and after submission, in line with the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 2 The proposed change of use is considered on balance to be acceptable in principle, would have an acceptable visual impact upon the character and appearance of the area, is not considered to impact upon the amenities of the occupiers of adjoining and nearby properties and would have an acceptable impact on highway and parking considerations. Adequate provision for people with disabilities would be made. The proposals are therefore considered acceptable having regard to Rushmoor Local Plan Policies SS2, SP1, SP1.1, DE1 and IN2 and DE8, the NPPF (2018) and the Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus SPD and Shop Front Design Guide SPD.





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### Project

Units 61 & 62  
Wellington Arcade  
Aldershot

### Client

London and Cambridge Properties

### Drawing Title

Upper Mall Level

### Drawing Number

WellingtonArcade-38

### Scale @ 1:1 on A4

1 : 200

### Date

16-05-04

All dimensions and information contained in these plans should be checked on site and with the Local Authority prior to commencing any building works. The works may also be controlled by the Town and Country Planning Act, Building Acts and The Party Wall Act. No works should be commenced prior to obtaining all necessary consents.