

Aldi Store at **Preston Street, Whitehaven**

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Section 1. **Introduction**

The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. (NPPF paragraph 124). Design and Access Statements are a key part of the planning process in promoting better quality and more sustainable design in development.

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application comprising: full application for a new Aldi Store of 2127m² gross external floorspace and net sales area of 1356m² with 95 associated car parking spaces (plus 4 no. staff spaces); vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access; and landscaping at Preston Street, Whitehaven.

Aldi currently has stores in Whitehaven, Workington and Cockermouth. Permission is sought for a new store in Whitehaven to provide local residents with an improved choice of shopping facilities.

This statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying plans and reports submitted with this application.

Section 2. **Site and Surroundings**

The application site is located on the site of an existing car park and disused ground partially behind terraces to the east of Preston Street.

The site sits to the south of Whitehaven town centre, is within walking distance of some residential areas of Whitehaven, as well as being located on a bus route. The site is well connected to the surrounding areas, sitting on the main thoroughfare of Preston Street.

The application site is elongated but irregular in shape and runs north-south. The boundaries vary; there are existing rubble stone walls to the area currently occupied by the car park, and some are to the rear of residential properties. The eastern and southern boundaries to the southern portion of the site sit within the disused land and have no current physical delineation.

To the north, beyond a footpath which bounds the site, are other retail units with associated parking, including an existing Aldi store; to the west, across Preston Street, is a large Asda store on an elevated site. There are residential properties directly bounding the western edge of the site in the southern portion. To the south are light industrial units and residential properties, and to the east is open undeveloped and disused land.

Access will be broadly in the same location as the existing car park access point on Preston Street, upgraded to suit the anticipated vehicular movements.

There is vegetation on the southern portion of the site, all of it unruly and overgrown, so much so it is not possible to view the whole site in its entirety, or indeed access the area. There is also evidence of invasive species – Japanese knotweed – which we understand is being treated and eradicated by .

The existing site plan is shown overleaf.

Existing Site Plan



Section 3. **Planning and Design Policy**

National policy

On 5 September 2023 the Government published a revised version of the NPPF. The most recent NPPF is a material consideration in the determination of all planning applications and fully replaces the previous editions.

The overall emphasis of the NPPF is to reiterate the Government's key objectives of facilitating economic growth and securing sustainable development. These overarching policies seek to deliver development in the most appropriate locations, thereby protecting and enhancing the environment.

Design

The Framework states the creation of 'high quality' buildings and places as fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. Paragraph 130 states planning decisions should aim to ensure that developments:

- Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but for the lifetime of the development;
- are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

Local policy

The adopted policies relating to design are contained in the Copeland Local Plan comprising The Copeland Local Plan 2013-2028 Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2013-28 (adopted 2013) and 'saved' policies of the Copeland Local Plan 2001-2016:

- *Policy DM10: Achieving Quality of Place* sets out the Council's expectation for a high standard of design and the fostering of 'quality places', through a number of measures, including responding positively to the character of a site and wider setting; incorporating existing features of interest including landscape, topography, local vernacular styles and building materials; and creating and maintaining reasonable standards of general amenity.
- *Policy DM11: Sustainable Development Standards* sets out the Council's ambition that development proposals reach high standards of sustainability, through requirements such as: high energy efficiency standards in relation to the Code for Sustainable Homes and BREEAM; buildings to maximise solar gain; construction materials to be sourced, where possible, from local and sustainable sources of production; and surface water is managed appropriately and inclusion of SuDS where possible.

Copeland Borough Council are in the process of producing a new Local Plan which once adopted will replace the Core Strategy and saved policies. The emerging plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination mid-2022 and hearings sessions held Q1 2023. In accordance with the requirements of NPPF, given the advanced stage of its preparation, the draft policies of the emerging Copeland Local Plan 2021-2038 can be attributed significant weight in the determination of planning applications.

- *Emerging Policy DS6PU: Design and Development Standards* sets out the Council's expectation for new development to meet high-quality standards of design, including measures such as: creation and enhancement of locally distinctive places sympathetic to surrounding context; use good quality building materials that reflects local character and vernacular, sourced locally where possible; support good health and well-being by incorporating high quality, inclusive and useful open spaces and providing high levels of residential amenity; create layouts that encourage walking and cycling; provision of safe and accessible pedestrian routes; create opportunities that encourage social interaction; be of flexible and adaptable design; maximise solar gain; and address land contamination and land stability.

The Whitehaven Town Centre and Harbourside SPD provides design guidance for future development in Whitehaven Town Centre and the adjacent harbourside area, particularly those Regeneration Priority Sites identified within the adopted Local Plan. Given this SPD is also referenced in the emerging Local Plan, it is presumed it will continue forward across the emerging plan period despite its' historic nature – being adopted in 2012.

The Site lies within the SPD boundary area with the reference 'Former Council Depot and adjoining land at Ginns' – WEOS5. The following notable guidelines are provided in relation to the Site:

- Interest in this former workshop site in the past has come from a major retailer for supermarket use – in a prominent position on the corner of two important approaches to the Town Centre;
- Major development opportunity on a key gateway route into the Town Centre;
- Could accommodate a significant high-density, mixed-use development – ideally innovative to support the proposed Sports Village (across the road at Pow Beck);
- Opportunity to provide a high-quality environment for the cycle path running through the site should be exploited, design should maximise connectivity between Pow Beck and Town Centre; and
- New development should extend to the back of the footpath to restore the building line on Preston Street, Ginns and Coach Road and provide a strong building edge around the Coach Road/Ginns Corner.

Section 4. **Site Context and Design Principles**

In accordance with national and local planning and design policies, the design approach to the site responds to the site and its surroundings. To determine this, the issues and opportunities were identified as:

ISSUES	OPPORTUNITIES
The proposed site layout needs to be designed to fit with the mix of land uses surrounding the site and also ensure both the foodstore and intended residential and retail development can co-exist without adverse impacts	Provide a foodstore in a highly sustainable location for the local community to provide a choice of shopping facilities.
Proximity of the site to the surrounding residential areas	Maximise the re-use of previously developed land with a foodstore.
Pedestrian access points into the site and connectivity with the existing and proposed residential areas.	Create a visually attractive foodstore that complements the surrounding buildings and reflects their scale and massing.
Treatment of the boundaries of the site to be visually attractive and provide security	Ensure the foodstore is accessible to all users arriving at the store by a choice of means of transport.
Proximity of the existing vehicle and pedestrian access point on Commercial Street.	Ensure an adequate level of car parking is achieved for the foodstore including bays and charging points for electric charged vehicles.
	Ensure the site is permeable with pedestrian access from several points around the site.
Protecting the residential amenity of nearby residents	Create between 30 and 50 new jobs for local people.

Existing Site Photographs

Picture 1 – looking south west into the southern half of site from the existing car park



Picture 2 – looking east across the car park in the northern part of the site



Section 5. **The Proposed Scheme**

Use

The proposed development for the site at Preston Street consists of a single storey Aldi store blade-roof building with vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access, car parking and landscaping on the northern and western section of the site. The application is a full planning application.

The application site is currently a car park; the rest vacant/disused. It is partially historically developed land, and the proposed development would create active use and new jobs. The Aldi store would broaden the range of food retail facilities and improve choice for nearby residents.

The proposed opening hours of the store are 0800 to 2200 hours Monday to Saturday and for six consecutive hours between 1000 and 1800 on Sundays. A Noise Assessment will be undertaken which considers the existing noise environment and then assesses the noise environment with the foodstore, on the existing residents and adjacent neighbours. The assessment will seek to demonstrate that the trading hours are compatible with the adjacent land uses.

A Transport Assessment has been carried out to ensure vehicles accessing the site and manoeuvring within the site can be accommodated safely with no detrimental effects on the existing road network. The upgrading of the access from Preston Street will ensure safety for all users. The Transport Assessment demonstrates the proposed uses are acceptable.

Amount

The overall application site area is 1 Ha/2.49 acres. Being a neighbourhood shopping facility, the proposed foodstore is 2127m² gross external area (1916m² gross internal area) with a net sales area of 1356m² sqm. The areas within the store not accessible to the public include the warehouse and staff and office facilities. A total of 100 dedicated Aldi car parking spaces are provided.

There are 4 other parking bays indicated on the plan proposed for use by Aldi staff (not included in the parking total).

Access and layout

The proposed site layout is informed by the site context and design principles as identified in Section 4 of this report, together with feedback received from the local planning authority through the pre-application enquiry process and comments received during the public consultation process. Full details of the public consultation are provided in the Statement of Community Involvement submitted with the planning application.

The proposed site layout has a main access from the west for all vehicles and pedestrians, with crossing points to allow safe access to the store, which sits to the south and west of the car park. The parking arrangement is simple and compact allowing space for soft landscaping to tie the site into its surroundings.

The building is set back from the main Preston Street frontage, and partially behind the residential terrace on the southwestern edge of the site, but still has good visibility from the main road across the parking area.

The service area is located to the southern side of the store with access for the goods vehicles through the car parking area and along a dedicated service road to the east of foodstore. Access to the service area has been designed to accommodate the turning manoeuvres of 16.5 metre articulated goods vehicles, these being the largest delivery vehicles which will serve the store. The vehicles will drive into the site in forward gear and reverse into the service ramp area and then exit the site in forward gear. The Transport Assessment gives full details of the servicing regime and demonstrates, using autotrack, that the manoeuvre can be undertaken safely.

The foodstore would be positioned in a broadly north-south orientation in the southern central portion of the site.

With the customer entrance and shop front to the north western corner of the building, the car parking area is to the north and west. For customers arriving by car, the store entrance is visible on entering the site, and the car park layout means it is easy to navigate towards it. The store entrance will be visible for pedestrians approaching from Preston Street in either direction.

A total of 100 car parking spaces are provided including 5 accessible bays, 9 parent & child bays and 4 active bays for electric vehicles. There are 4 bays provided for motorcycles within the main car park, and cycle stands for 8 bicycles to the northern elevation, in front of the glazed shopfront, where there will be natural surveillance.

Aldi's standard refrigeration plant is provided at ground level to the side of the store at the south west corner. The results of the Noise Assessment have resulted in some mitigation being required which is reflected in the acoustic fences shown on the site plan, so as ensure that the location of the service area and the refrigeration plant cause no adverse impact to residential amenity. An area has also been provided for external bin storage within the loading bay.

The overall site layout ensures the opportunities for crime and disorder are minimised with the site being open to achieve good natural surveillance. Low level shrubs ensure there are no hiding places within the site. The proposed site layout is shown on the following page.

Proposed Site Plan



Scale and appearance

The gross external floor area of the proposed Aldi store is 2127m² which sits within a site of 10,080m². The maximum height of the proposed store is to the front elevation being 6.25m to the blade roof. The height of the rear elevation is 5.0m from the ground.

Within the immediate vicinity of the site, there is a mix of architectural styles and building materials. The residential properties close by are two storey, terraced, tiled pitched roofed properties of rendered/roughcast, with some painted a variety of colours.

The surrounding retail/commercial units are a mix of brick, metal cladding and concrete tiled/flat roofs.

In terms of scale, the proposed single storey, blade roof foodstore, reflects the scale of the buildings surrounding the site. It is also set down within the site at a lower level to the existing buildings due to the complicated nature of the site topography.

The overall design of the store is a modern, contemporary style with a simple palette of materials combining silver and grey cladding, aluminium windows, steel doors and glazing. There is a canopy wrapping above the shop front which runs along the west elevation to maximise natural light in the store. The west and north elevations show the configuration of the loading bay that allows HGVs to dock at floor level with the building.

There will be no daily activity to the rear of the store. There are two escape doors which will be used to exit the store in emergencies only. There are two high level windows to the western side of the elevations to allow light into the staff rooms. There are no other windows and therefore no overlooking issues.

The building elevations are shown in the following page.

Building elevations



Constraints

A number of options were looked at to place the foodstore in the location on the site which would provide the optimal sales floor, operational functionality and visibility.

The site is constrained by 3 main elements:

- Vehicular access point
- Existing sewer and culvert
- Relative levels around the site

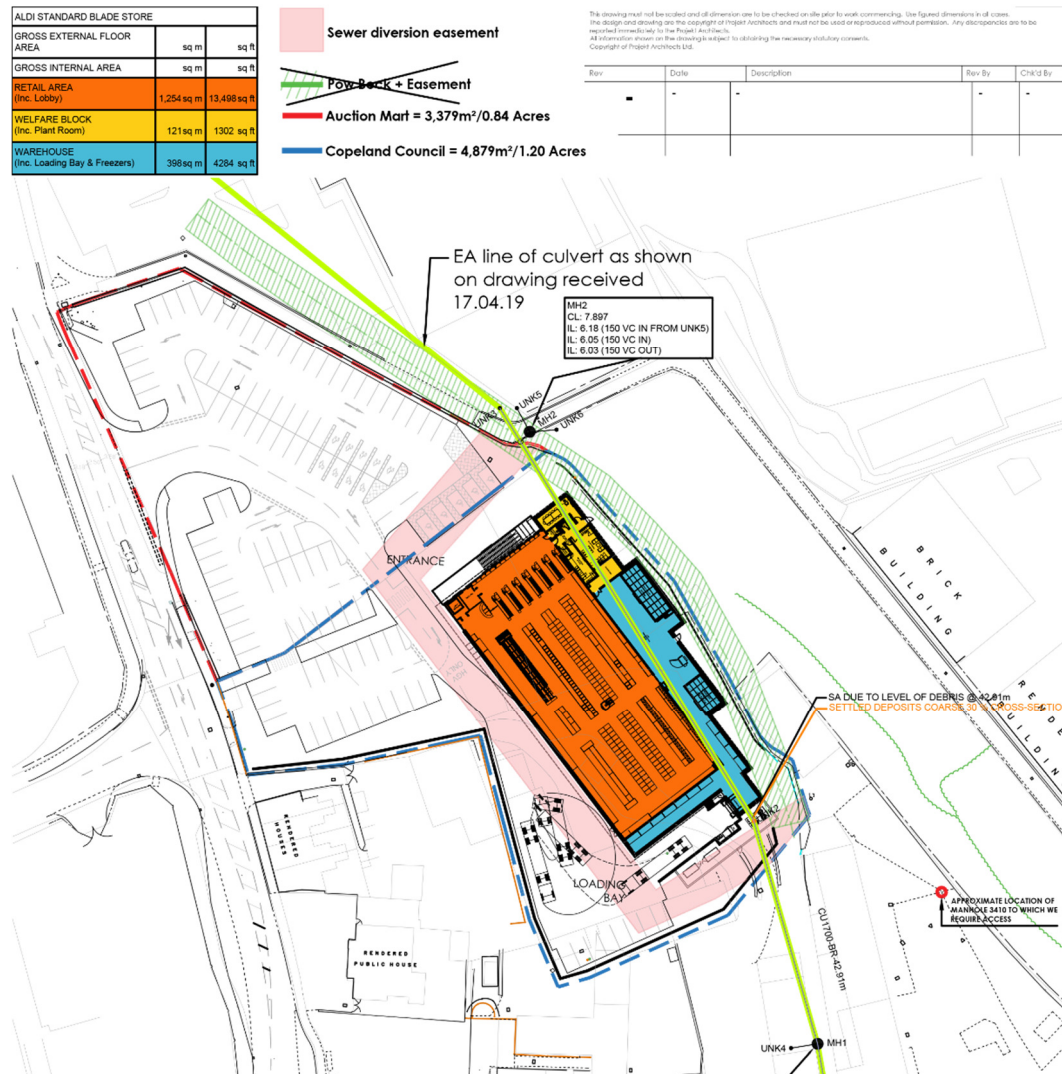
The layout on the next page illustrates these elements and demonstrates that the building is in the optimal location.

On the following pages, there are some alternatives shown which were looked at and discounted. The reasoning is given next to the relevant plan.

Constraints plan



Alternative layout 1



This layout does not address the request to bring the store closer to Preston Street, but has a fairly standard sales area and a modified warehouse hard up against the eastern boundary.

It is constrained by the fixed site access point.

This layout was discounted for the following reasons:

- The levels drop off to the east resulting in a lot of underbuilding and greater retention at the southern boundary.
- The cost of diverting the sewer and culvert made the scheme unviable

Alternative layout 2

ALDI STANDARD BLADE STORE		
GROSS EXTERNAL FLOOR AREA	sq m	sq ft
GROSS INTERNAL AREA	sq m	sq ft
RETAIL AREA (Inc. Lobby)	1,315 sq m	14,154 sq ft
WELFARE BLOCK (Inc. Plant Room)	121 sq m	1302 sq ft
WAREHOUSE (Inc. Loading Bay & Freezers)	353 sq m	3,799 sq ft

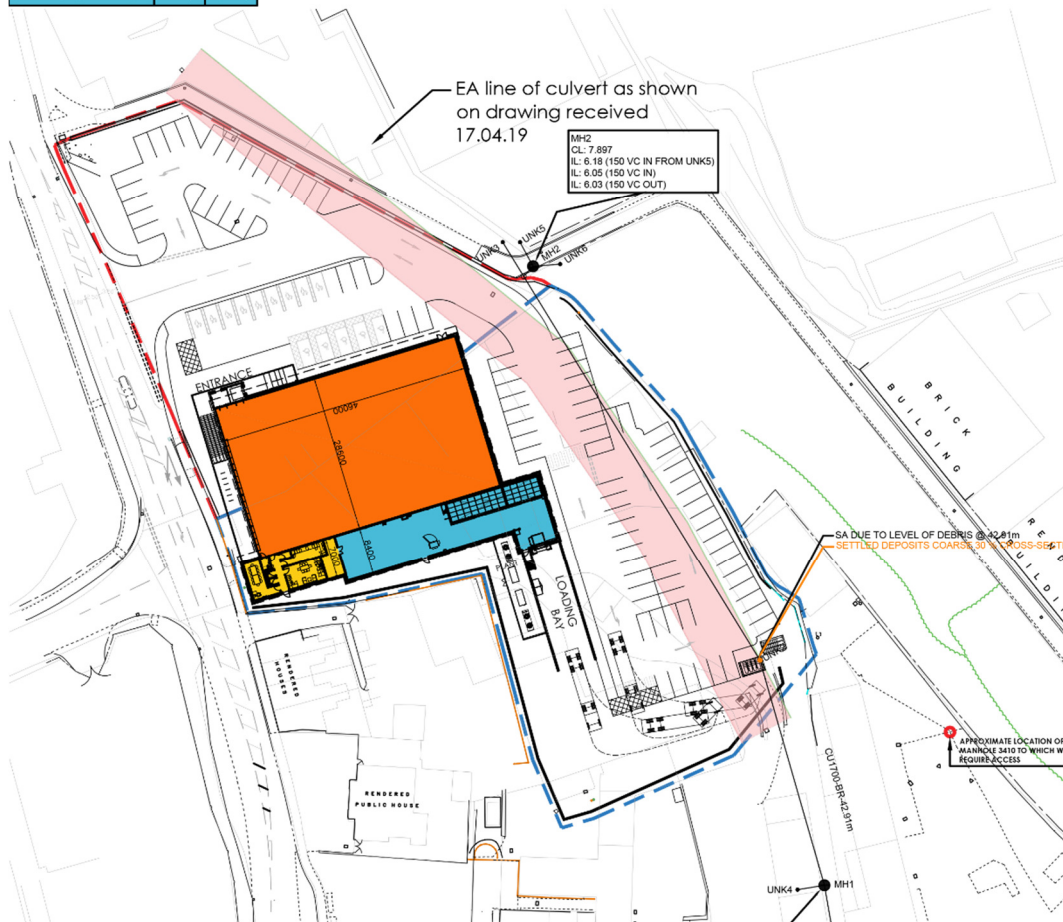
existing sewer easement

Auction Mart = 3,379m²/0.84 Acres

■ Copeland Council = 4,879m²/1.20 Acres

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This layout does address the request to bring the store closer to Preston Street, and has the shopfront, entrance, trolley bays etc. directly addressing the street frontage.

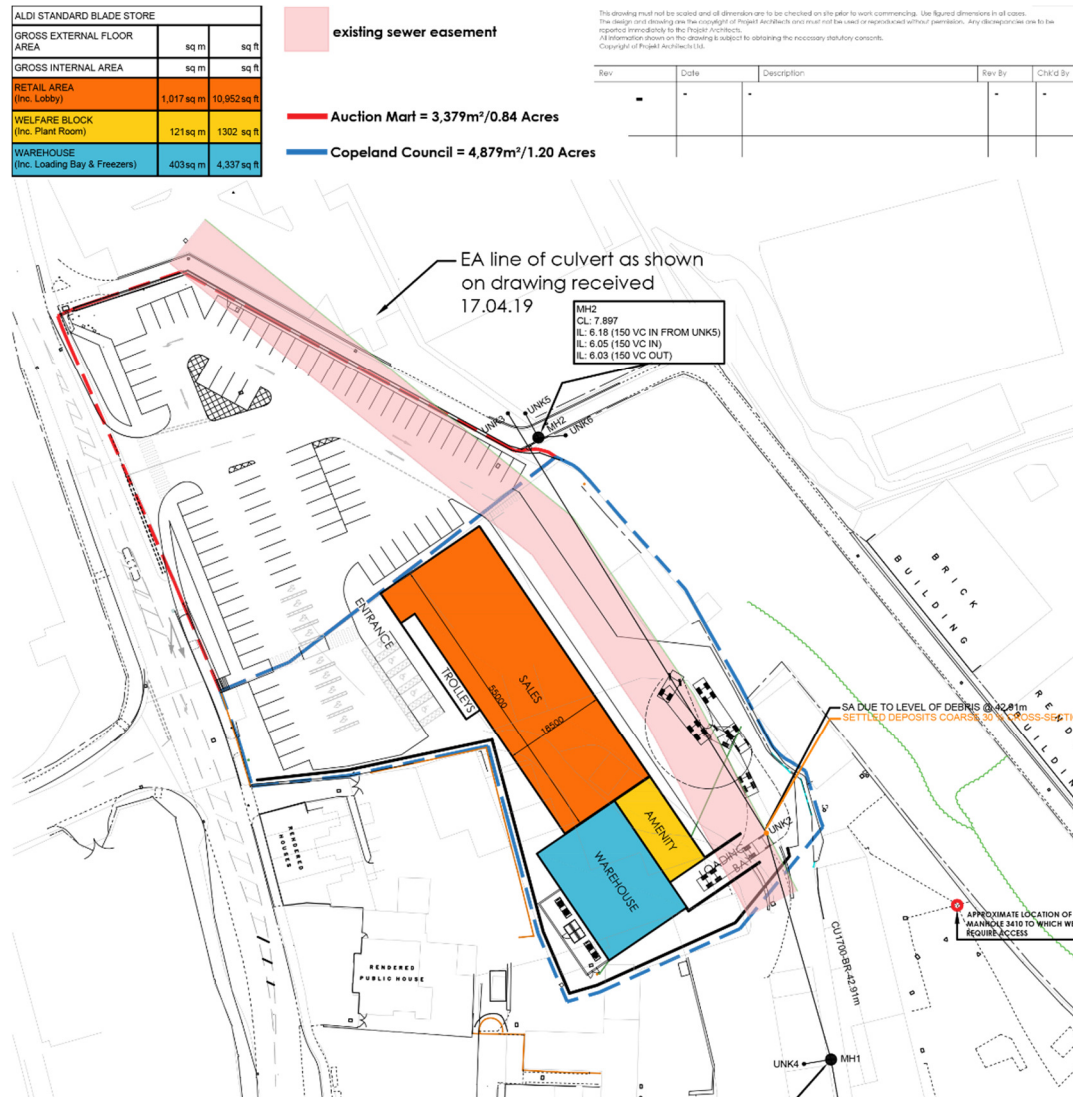
It has a very modified sales area but fairly standard warehouse arrangement

It is constrained by the fixed site access point on the existing sewer/culvert location.

This layout was discounted for the following reasons:

- The sales area is so modified that it cannot meet the minimum length required for merchandising.
- The width of the sales area is also non-standard, and not sufficient to provide an additional full aisle of merchandising.
- The bulk of the parking is very remote from the store entrance and necessitates remote trolley bays.
- The crossover of delivery HGVs and customer vehicles/pedestrians is likely to be dangerous, particularly if people are pushing trolleys over a long distance

Alternative layout 3



This layout does not address the request to bring the store closer to Preston Street, but has the entrance & trolley bays addressing the street from within the site.

It has very modified sales, amenity and warehouse areas.

It is constrained by the fixed site access point and the existing sewer/culvert location.

This layout was discounted for the following reasons:

- The sales area, whilst full length, is so modified in width that it cannot meet the minimum aisle requirements for merchandising.
- The loading bay and HGV turning requirements are not achievable in the available area
- The warehouse and amenity are so modified as to also make the practicality of the store operation unacceptable.

Conclusions

This statement is submitted in support of the redevelopment of a previously partially developed site and car park at Preston Street, Whitehaven.

The proposed site layout responds to the site-specific issues and constraints identified whilst accommodating Aldi's operational requirements.

It is considered the proposed use, amount of development, layout, scale and appearance are acceptable in design terms and the proposals will deliver a modern, contemporary design which will improve the visual appearance of the site and the surrounding area. The proposed store reflects the scale and massing of the adjacent buildings, existing and proposed, in the surrounding area. It includes the provision of EV charging bays and secure cycle parking.

Overall, the proposal brings investment to Preston Street, Whitehaven.

It has been assessed regarding relevant planning and design policy and technical considerations and complies with the presumption in favour of sustainable development.