

18 November 2022

Delivered by via Planning Applications Wales (PP-11692086)

Planning Department
Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Planning Division
The Quays
Brunel Way
Neath
SA11 2GG

Ref: LOUT3004

Dear Sir / Madam

PLANNING APPLICATION FOR CHANGE OF USE FROM CLASS A1 (SHOPS) TO CLASS A3 (FOOD AND DRINK) AT UNIT 1, NEATH TOWN CENTRE RETAIL DEVELOPMENT, NEATH, SA11 3ES

On behalf of our client, Loungers UK Limited ('Loungers'), please find enclosed an application for the change of use of the above unit (Unit 1) from Class A1 (shops) to Class A3 (food and drink).

The application proposal is described as follows:

"Change of Use from Class A1 (shops) to Class A3 (food and drink) and installation of extraction and ventilation equipment, including condenser units on the roof"

This application has been submitted via Planning Applications Wales (ref. PP-11692086) and comprises:

- Completed application forms and certificates;
- Site Location Plan;
- Roof Plan;
- Floor Plans;
- Ventilation Statement;
- Technical Specifications of Plant Equipment; and
- Cover Letter (this correspondence).

The requisite planning application fee of £460 will be paid directly to Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council via BACS.

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APPLICATION SITE AND SURROUNDING CONTEXT

The application site comprises Unit 1 of the recently constructed redevelopment in Neath town centre. It forms part of the Neath Town Centre Redevelopment, comprising retail and leisure units. The ground floor extends to 328 sqm.

A mix of town centre uses surround the application site. National retailers currently represented within the town include M&S, Boots, Clarks, WHSmith, Holland & Barrett, Costa Coffee and Sports Direct.

PLANNING HISTORY

Unit 1 forms part of the wider Neath Town Centre Redevelopment. Phase 1 (P2013/0863) sought full planning permission for the demolition of the Magistrates Court and erection of a multi-storey car park and also sought outline permission for the development of the development retail units, retail/office units and retail/food and drink units, as well as up to 31 residential units. Planning permission was granted in November 2013.

Phase 2 (P2018/1024) sought full planning permission for the redevelopment of Neath town centre, consisting of 8 retail units and 1 first floor unit (A1, A3 or D2 use). Planning permission was granted in February 2019.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The application proposal seeks a change of use from the approved Class A1 use (shops) to Class A3 (food and drink). The proposed operating hours are 9am – 12am Monday to Friday and 9am – 11pm on Sunday. The proposed end occupier is Loungers.

The application also seeks approval for the installation of plant and ventilation equipment. This includes condenser units on the roof and extraction vents, which are detailed on the submitted plans.

POLICY CONTEXT

The development plan is the Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan (2011-2026), adopted in 2016.

The site is located within the Coastal Corridor Strategy Area (as defined by Policies CCRS1 and SP 5 of the LDP). Sustainable growth and development is promoted in the Coastal Corridor Strategy Area. Policy SP 5 notes that one of the ways this will be achieved is through *“promoting mixed use regeneration schemes at Neath Town Centre”*.

The site is located on a defined Primary Shopping Street, which aims to protect the retail function of the area. Policy R2 addresses proposals within retail centres. The supporting text to this policy recognises that uses within Class A (including Class A3) are likely to be acceptable in principle (paragraph 5.2.44).

It states that, within the designated Primary Shopping Streets, ground floor uses other than Class A1 will only be permitted where:

- (a) The proposal falls within Class A2 or Class A3; and
- (b) The proposal does not result in the overdominance of any non-A1 use; and

- (c) The proposal on its own and/or in combination with other proposals and commitments does not lead to:
 - (i) A material adverse effect on the retail function of the Primary Shopping Streets; or
 - (ii) A material reduction in the number and distribution of shop premises within the retail frontage that it will occupy and within the Primary Shopping Streets as a whole.

PLANNING ASSESSMENT

The proposed change of use to Class A3 is considered entirely appropriate in this location. The proposed development directly accords with the principles set out in Policy R2. This application only relates to Unit 1 of the redevelopment. The remaining 7 units (as well as the first-floor unit will remain in Class A1 use.

The proposed development will not result in the overdominance of non-Class A1 uses. The application site is surrounded by Class A1 uses, predominantly comprising national operators such as Boots, WHSmith, Superdrug and Argos.

The proposed development would not dilute the retail function of Neath town centre and would not dominate or fragment the frontage. On the contrary, the proposed development would complement the primary retail function by creating active frontages and attracting footfall. This accords with Policy R2, which supports proposals which will enhance the vitality, viability and attractiveness of the centre. The provision of a new Class A3 use in this location also accords with national planning policy, by contributing to a successful evening economy and ensuring a diversity of activity and uses within the defined town centre.

The introduction of a popular restaurant chain to Neath town centre would drive footfall, increase dwell times and maintain an active frontage in this important new development. It would make a positive contribution to the vitality, viability and diversity of the area. This will result in a number of positive spin-off benefits.

CONCLUSION

The proposed development will help to secure a sustainable and viable future for Neath town centre and help to sustain footfall and activity, directly benefiting its overall vitality and viability. There are no material considerations to indicate that planning permission should be withheld.

We trust that the enclosed material will enable the prompt validation of the application. However, should you have any queries or require anything further, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely



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