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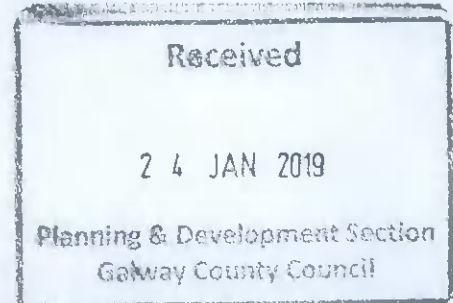
P.C. D. Date 16/2/19



LOCAL SHOPS - LOCAL COMMUNITIES

23 January 2019

Planning Section
Aras an Chontae
Galway County Council
Prospect Hill
Galway.



Re: No: 18/1811

Application by Aldi Stores (Ireland) Ltd seeking planning permission at Townparks 1st Division, Tuam, Co. Galway "for the construction of a single storey discount foodstore (to include off licence use) with a gross floor area of 1,816 sqm (net retail area: 1,325 sqm). The development includes the erection of 2 no. free standing doubled-sided illuminated signs, 3 no. illuminated gable signs and 1 no. non illuminated entrance sign and 1 no. Special Buy sign. The proposed development will be serviced by 97 no. car parking spaces. The proposed development includes for the demolition of an existing building and structures on the site (1,703 sqm). The proposed development also includes for the provision of an ESB substation and switchroom as well as all landscaping, boundary treatments and site development works, connection to existing services and all other works necessary to facilitate the proposed development. The planning application is accompanied by a Natura Impact Statement."

A Chara,

RGDATA, the representative association for independent family owned grocery outlets nationwide, would like to make an Objection with regard to the above referenced application.

RGDATA supports sustainable and strategic retail development that is in line with the Retail Planning Guidelines and Local Retail Strategies. This is in the best interests of local communities, local consumers and vibrant and vital local towns, suburbs and villages.

RGDATA supports new shops and new formats in town centres and in retail zones as a diversity of shops providing citizens with choice, convenience and value.

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RGDATA also supports the Retail Planning Guidelines and, particularly the guidelines relating to maintaining the vitality and vibrancy of town centres and existing centres.

RGDATA is particularly concerned with the planning implications of such a large scale retail development at this "edge of centre" location outside of the Commercial core of Tuam. We are of the opinion that the proposed development represents a significant threat to the vitality and viability of the town centre and should not be permitted. Our concerns are outlined in greater detail below.

Edge of Centre Context & Impact on Primary Retail Area of Tuam

The application site is currently occupied by warehousing & builders providers, with an open commercial yard. It is located outside of the commercial core of Tuam, to the west of the town centre. The lands across the road to the north and west consist exclusively of residential use. The subject site is located at the corner of the Milltown Road and the Ballygaddy road. Whilst the subject site is Zoned "C1" under the provisions of the Tuam Local Area Plan, it is located outside of the "Primary Retail Area" of Tuam. In this regard, the subject site should be categorised as "Edge of Centre" site, which is defined under the Retail Planning Guidelines (RPGs) as; "A location within easy walking distance of the primary retail area of a city town centre or district centre." Therefore, proposed retail development should be assessed in accordance with its location and function i.e. an "Edge of Centre" site.

The vitality, viability and retail function of the commercial core of Tuam is particularly vulnerable. This is reinforced by the LAP which confirms that "A review of the retail function within the Town centre was carried out as part of the review of the LAP. Of the 191 properties surveyed within the defined town centre there was a vacancy rate of approximately 22% of all units surveyed." i.e. 42 no. town centre units. This is significantly higher than the national average vacancy rate within urban areas i.e. 13.1% (Source: Geoview Commercial Vacancy Rates Report, Q2 2018).

The LAP also states that "it is imperative that the plan supports the vitality and viability of the town centre, in order to maintain and expand its retail offer in a sustainable manner, in line with the national policy on Retail Planning – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012)."

In this regard, the importance of the Sequential Development Approach is outlined in Section 2.5.2 of the RPGs. This states that "only where the applicant can demonstrate, and the planning authority is satisfied, that there are no sites or potential sites within a city, town centre or designated district centre should an edge-of-centre site be considered." In this regard the applicant has failed to provide a Sequential Test and has failed to consider alternative sites within the "Primary Retail Area" of Tuam as well as Opportunity Sites, located within the Town Centre. The latter sites are identified as a priority for the delivery of Retail development within the town.

In these circumstances it is considered that the proposed edge of centre retail development would materially contravene Objective ED4 of the LAP entitled "Town

Centre Viability & Vitality" which sets out to "Ensure a balance of development in the retail core in the town centre so as to ensure that the main streets, leading to Market Square are revitalised, vacancies are reduced and an unbalanced retail pull from this area is avoided." As such, the application should be refused.

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Town Centre Health Check

RGDATA also respectfully suggests that a Collaborative Town Centre Health Check should be carried out in Tuam before any additional grocery/convenience or other retail floorspace is considered in or on the edge or outskirts of the town.

The Collaborative Town Centre Health Check will identify the key data about Tuam and will assist in identifying exactly what new retail and other development is required, what is in the best interests of promoting a good retail mix, what will best service the actual population of the town, ensure the vibrancy and vitality of the town centre, provide sustainable development and address the alarming 22% vacancy rate in the town centre.

Chapter 2 Retail Policy Context, of the Retail Planning Guidelines 2012 states:

"Future retail development should be plan-led following the settlement hierarchy, including the identification of retail requirements and appropriate planning policies and objectives and implementation measures aimed at securing development plan objectives."

The Collaborative Town Centre Health Check will identify the current building uses and vacancy data about Tuam and will assist in producing a Town Plan which will identify exactly what new development is required, what retail requirements will promote the best mix, what other business, cultural and community services are required, what will best service and grow the population of the town and the footfall into the town centre. This strategic approach will develop the vibrancy and vitality of the town centre and provide sustainable development.

The Town Plan will also determine the exact future retail needs of the town as the Collaborative Town Centre Health Check includes:

- Land Use surveys to establish the overall vacancy rates in the town.
- Retailer surveys to establish current levels of commercial activity and outlook.
- Pedestrian counts to establish actual town centre visitor numbers.
- Shoppers surveys to rate visitor experience and satisfaction.

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Non-compliance with "C1" Zoning Objective

The entirety of the subject lands is Zoned "C1" under the provisions of the LAP. The accompanying Zoning Objective "LU1" sets out to *"Promote the development of the Town Centre as an intensive, well connected, high quality, well-landscaped, human-scaled and accessible environment, with an appropriate mix of uses, including residential, commercial, service, tourism, enterprise, public and community uses as appropriate, that provide a range of retail, services, facilities and amenities to the local community and visitors. The town centre and associated main streets shall remain the primary focus for retail and service activity within Tuam."*

We are of the opinion that the proposed development materially contravenes Objective LU1, for the following reasons;

- Instead of an *"intensive"* development, the proposal represents a low-intensity single use scheme. Similarly, the density of the proposed development is extremely low for a site Zoned "Town Centre/Commercial". In this regard, DM Guideline LU1 entitled "Development Densities" recommends a Plot Ratio of between 1.00 to 1.25 for this zone, in the interest of urban consolidation and sustainability. Instead, the proposed single storey/single use development would equate to a Plot Ratio of **0.24**. This represents a completely inefficient use of zoned and serviced lands.
- Instead of a *"well connected"* development and an *"accessible environment"*, the proposal relies exclusively on the provision of steps to link with the Milltown Road. Furthermore, it proposes an unsupervised walkway along the River bank. This form of connectivity is entirely unacceptable.
- Instead of a *"high quality"* development, the proposed design consists of a "big box" with a "sea of car parking" fronting onto the Ballygaddy road, in addition to a blank façade onto the "River Nanny".
- Instead of a *"well-landscaped"* development, owing to contrary details provided on file, it is uncertain as to whether the existing mature trees along the southern edge of the site (along the bank of the River Nanny), are proposed to be retained in situ or not. Furthermore, neither a professional landscaping scheme or Tree Survey has accompanied the application.
- Instead of an *"appropriate mix of uses"*, the proposed development consists of a single use retail development.
- The site is not located within the Town Centre (proper) or associated main streets, which is the primary focus for retail development in the town.

In this regard, the proposed development, would materially contravene Objective LU1 of the LAP, and should be refused accordingly.

Inefficient (unsustainable) use of zoned land

The Retail Design Manual (published by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht) reinforces the principle of *'Higher density and mixed-use development*

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Section 6 of the
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creating compact urban areas and the efficient use of land (See Section 6 of the Design Manual).

Section 6.2 points out that *“New retail development – and particularly larger schemes in appropriate locations – can deliver more compact urban form by optimising the capacity of urban lands. An excessive land-take for single-storey floorplates results in subsequent development having to locate further away, extending the distances between the new shopping location and the local centre, thereby discouraging walking and cycling for getting around.”*

This Section of the Design Manual goes on to state that *“An increasing trend – particularly in larger schemes – is to develop the space over shopping for other compatible uses such as cinemas, restaurants, leisure uses and housing. These development models increase gross densities and can contribute to the creation of compact urban form in appropriate city and town centre locations.”*

The creation of a stand-alone single storey supermarket ‘big-box’ with a large car park, on zoned and serviced lands, along a high profile corner site, will result in a poor form of urban enclosure at this urban location. Accordingly, the opportunity for a more sustainable mixed-use urban development will be lost.

In this regard, it is considered that the Mixed-Use Scheme, permitted by the Council under Pl. Ref. No. 09/1722 (As extended under EOD Pl. Ref. No. 14/154), is considerably more appropriate in terms urban consolidation, intensity and efficiency of land use within the “Hub” town of Tuam. Although it is acknowledged that the latter permission referred to a larger site, there is no reason why a mixed-use development could not be accommodated on the subject application site.

In addition, it is considered that such an inefficient use of zoned & serviced lands would materially contravene “Objective ST 1 – Integrated Land Use and Transport” of the LAP.

Urban Design & Visual Impact

The subject site is located at a high profile location, along one of the primary approach roads into the town of Tuam i.e. the Milltown Road. It also has extensive road frontage onto the Ballygaddy Road. Such an important corner site requires a very high quality urban design intervention. Instead, owing to the lower ground levels on site, relative to the public roads, the proposal will consist of a poor urban design response to the public realm, which will be dominated by a large car park.

The redevelopment of this site had the opportunity to provide for a high quality, multiple level, ‘book end’ / entrance design to mark its prominent location and provide for a mixture of uses. Instead, an elongated single storey, standalone retail ‘box’ is proposed, which is substandard and monolithic in appearance. The layout also fails to

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provide usable open space areas, with an inadequate provision for safe pedestrian movements within the site. Galway County Council

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Unfortunately, the proposed facades consist of monotonous elongated elevations with little or no visual interest. In particular, the southern elevation facing onto a proposed riverside walkway on the banks of the River Nanny, will consist entirely of concrete panels, with absolutely no animation or passive surveillance proposed. In this context, the proposed development would be incongruous in terms of its design, would result in an adverse visual impact as viewed from the public realm and would result in a substandard urban design intervention at this location.

The proposed urban design intervention at this location is particularly disappointing, especially when compared to what was permitted previously under PI. Ref. No. 09/1722 (& EOD PI. Ref. No. 14/154). The urban design potential of the site is best described in the "Design Statement" which accompanied PI. Ref. No. 09/1722. This stated that "*The site offers opportunities to develop public amenities, integrate with the town centre, promote active street facades, open up public vistas, and to make better use of the site....*" Regrettably, on this occasion the proposed development will deliver little or no urban design benefits.

In these circumstances, the proposed development should be refused by reason that it would materially contravene Urban Design Objectives contained within the LAP.

Finally, the proposed development is located adjacent to the Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) for Tuam i.e. to the north and south. Owing to the inappropriateness of the design response to its context, it is considered that the proposed development would materially contravene Objective HC 3 of the LAP.

Building Height

As per the Section 28 Ministerial Guidelines entitled "*Urban Development and Building Heights (2018)*", it is now government policy to actively encourage Higher Buildings in Urban Areas. These guidelines "*require that the scope to consider general building heights of at least three to four storeys, coupled with appropriate density, in locations outside what would be defined as city and town centre areas, and which would include suburban areas, must be supported in principle at development plan and development management levels.*"

In this context, the proposed single storey development on low lying lands adjacent to a multi-level 4-5 storey commercial building, is entirely inappropriate, and would be contrary to the provisions of these Ministerial Guidelines.

Inadequacy of Car parking & potential for Traffic Hazard

Proposed Retail development has a stated gross floor area of 1,816sqm. According to Table 13.5 of the Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021 (CDP), the parking requirement for a "*Large Store (>1000sqm gross)*" is "*1 space per 12sqm gross*

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floorspace". This indicates a car parking requirement of 151 spaces. However, the proposed parking provision of only 97 spaces representing a significant shortfall of 54 spaces or 35%.

Having regard to the shortfall of car parking spaces on site and the nature of car dependency associated with supermarket shopping, the proposed retail floorspace area would appear to be excessive. Therefore, it would appear that the proposed retail floorspace provision exceeds the capacity of the site. Furthermore, the stand alone (single use) nature of the proposed development, indicates that the development would be almost wholly reliant on the private car and the potential for multi-purpose trips is limited. This is a wholly unsustainable form of development which will encourage additional car journeys and as such is contrary to the Sustainable Transport Strategy

Such a significant shortfall in car parking is also likely to generate haphazard car parking behaviour in the vicinity of the site, along the adjoining public roads and residential housing estates. Accordingly, the application should be refused.

The proposal intends to utilise access onto the Ballygaddy road. However, there would appear to be potential conflict between the vehicles entering/exiting the Homevalue hardware premises and the proposed Retail Development. This is a safety issue for pedestrians and motorists, which has not been addressed. Furthermore, a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit (RSA) been prepared. In this regard, Objective TI 10 of the CDP sets out to require "all proposed new significant development proposals" to be accompanied by an RSA. In these circumstances, in the absence of an RSA, the application should be refused.

Inadequate Foul Drainage Proposals

As part of the Pre-Connection Enquiry Feedback, Irish water refer to the requirement for a pumping station. However, such proposals do not form part of the proposed "Foul water drainage design". This raises questions as to whether connection to the Public Sewerage network is feasible and would affect the Planning Authority's "Appropriate Assessment" of the scheme.

Natural Heritage

There is an existing indigenous treeline in situ along the southern edge of the site, along the northern bank of the River Nanny, which functions as biodiversity area. Although the application states that the impact on Bats is likely, no site specific bat survey accompanies the application.

The content of the Site Layout Plan (Drawing No. 15158/P/004) is a concern as it includes a notation for "Existing trees to be removed" along the River Nanny. Furthermore, in the absence of having a detailed tree survey with accompanying "Root Protection Zones", the retention of the existing riverside trees is entirely uncertain, especially as it is proposed to build in such close proximity to the riverbank.

In these circumstances, the failure to submit a Tree Survey would materially contravene "Objective NH 9 – Trees and Hedgerows" of the LAP.

Similarly, Objectives NH5 & NH8 of the LAP which require a minimum 10m setback from the River Nanny (as measured from the near river bank). However, the proposed development, would materially contravene these objectives and would represent an inappropriate design response and insensitivity to this riparian biodiversity area.

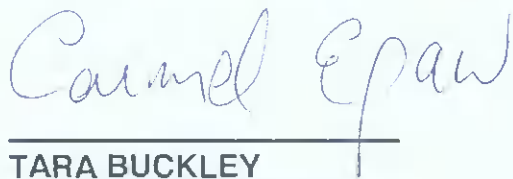
Excessive Signage

In addition to the fundamental issues raised above, the signage proposals are considered to be inappropriate and excessive. In this regard it is proposed to erect 3 no. internally illuminated gable signs and 1 no. entrance sign. In addition, it is proposed to provide a huge internally illuminated Totem sign (5.4m high X 2.27m wide), to address the Milltown road. These signage proposals are excessive and would serve as a distraction to road users along the public road. In this regard the signage proposals should be refused on visual amenity and traffic safety grounds.

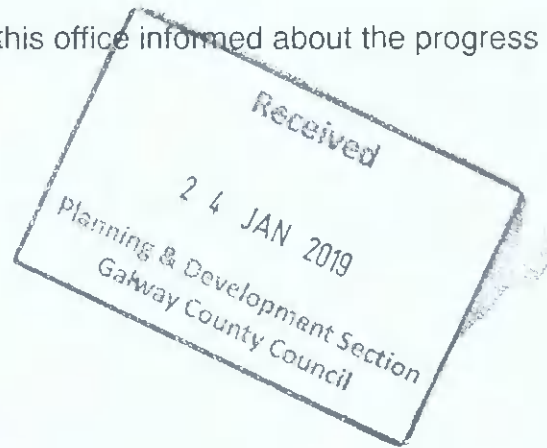
For the reasons outlined above, we trust the application will be refused.

I enclose the €20 fee and trust you will keep this office informed about the progress of this application.

Yours sincerely

PP


TARA BUCKLEY
DIRECTOR GENERAL



25/01/2019

Tara Buckley
RGDATA
Mentec House, Pottery Road
Dun Laoghaire
Co. Dublin A96 K6P3

TAG: Uimh. Thag Pleanála: 18/1811 - PERMISSION for the construction of a single storey discount foodstore (to include off licence use) with a gross floor area of 1,816 sqm (net retail area: 1,325 sqm). The development includes the erection of 2 no. free standing doubled-sided illuminated signs, 3 no. illuminated gable signs and 1 no. non illuminated entrance sign and 1 no. Special Buy sign. The proposed development will be serviced by 97 no. car parking spaces. The proposed development includes for the demolition of an existing building and structures on the site (1,703 sqm). The proposed development also includes for the provision of an ESB substation and switchroom as well as all landscaping, boundary treatments and site development works, connection to existing services and all other works necessary to facilitate the proposed development. The planning application is accompanied by a Natura Impact Statement. Gross floor space of proposed works: 1,816 sqm. Gross floor space of any demolition: 1,703 sqm

i mbaile fearainn / in the townland of: Townparks 1st Division

**RIALACHÁIN PLEANÁLA AGUS
FORBARTHA, 2001-2002**

**ADMHÁIL ar AIGHNEACHT nó
TUAIRIM atá FAIGHTE
ar IARRATAS PLEANÁLA**

**PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
REGULATIONS, 2001-2002**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT of RECEIPT of
SUBMISSION or OBSERVATION on a
PLANNING APPLICATION**

IS DOICIMÉAD THÁBHACHTACH É SEO!

**COINNIGH AN DOICIMÉAD SEO GO
SÁBHÁILTE. BEIDH ORT AN ADMHÁIL
SEO A THAISPEÁINT DON BHORD
PLEANÁLA MÁ S MIAN LEAT
ACHOMHAIRC A DHÉANAMH AR
CHINNEADH AN ÚDARÁIS PLEANÁLA**

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THE DECISION OF THE PLANNING
AUTHORITY**

Tá aighneacht/tuairim faighte i scríbhinn ó Tara Buckley ar an 25/01/2019 maidir leis an iarratas pleanála thuas.

Tá an táille cuí de €0 íoctha.

Tá an t-aighneacht/tuairim de réir na forálacha cuí de na Rialacháin um Pleanáil agus Forbairt, 2001 agus cuirfidh an tÚdarás Pleanála san áireamh iad nuair atá cinneadh dhá dhéanamh ar an iarratas pleanála.

A submission/observation in writing has been received from Tara Buckley on 25/01/2019 in relation to the above planning application.

The appropriate fee of € 0 has been paid.

The submission/observation is in accordance with the appropriate provisions of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 and will be taken into account by the planning authority in its determination of the planning application.

AIRE

Tabhair faoi deara gur é an dáta is déanaí do chinneadh ar an geomhad seo ná 16/2/19.

Má tharlaíonn sé nach bhfaigheann tú fógra maidir leis an gcinneadh seo (trí phostas cláraithe) laistigh de 3 – 5 Lá den dáta thuas, déan teagmháil leis an oifig seo ar an bpointe ag 091 509 308 nó ar ríomhphost ag planning@galwaycoco.ie, chun a chinntiú go gceíofaíonn tú le sprioc amanna achomharc an Bhord Pleanála.

E. Keaveney

Administrative Officer, Planning

N.B

Please note that the latest date for decision on this file is 16/2/19.

Should you not receive notification of this decision (by registered post) within 3 – 5 days of the above date, please contact this office immediately at 091 509 308 or email at planning@galwaycoco.ie, in order to ensure that you meet an Bord Pleanála appeal deadlines.