

Tarporley Parish Council

Informal Meeting with Representatives of Aldi

Monday 22nd September, Tarporley Community Centre Committee Room.

Present :

Parish Council - Gill Clough, Elaine Chapman, Julie Hall, John Millington, Ken Parker (chairman), Gordon Pearson, Nigel Taylor, Andrew Wallace.

Clerk - Ann Wright.

Aldi Representatives - George Brown, Aldi, Joanna Gabrilatsou, planning JLL, Iain Miller, transport consultant Cameron Rose Associates, Sarah Rhodes, architect The Harris Partnership, Emyr Williams - Liberty Properties.

The following points were raised during discussions:-

Aldi are looking to create 10 more stores in Cheshire to take the pressure of existing stores, the nearest existing stores to Tarporley are Tarvin Road in Chester, Nantwich and Winsford.

Tarporley is being considered as it is a sustainable location having been identified as a key service centre with a growing population.

Areas for discussion for the meeting identified by Aldi representatives to include Tarporley's appetite for an Aldi store, why Tarporley is sustainable and where the neighbourhood plan has got to.

It was noted that typical drive to Aldi by customers is 5 minutes, however customers from Tarporley and other villages are travelling 15, 20 minutes to reach stores. Tarporley's population is approx 3000 the majority of which are travelling out of the village to do their 'big' shop.

Aldi stores are modest in size (3 stores fit in 1 Tesco extra) and lend themselves to villages and will help keep the spend local and create linked shopping trips where people visit other shops in the village as well as Aldi as Aldi will not supply everything they need.

Aldi have a regional distribution centre based in Neston, and hope to develop 80 to 100 stores countrywide in the next year. They are community based stores. Postcode surveys done at the Tarvin Road store show a large proportion of customers are from the Tarporley area.

Aldi are at the very start of the process of developing a store in the village, they have identified a site and now want to gain a community view on the idea. They are aware of parking issues in Tarporley and will provide an free overspill car park with easy access onto the High Street.

The Parish Council Chairman confirmed the Council would not be giving an opinion as that would be fed by the community responses to the scheme.

It was emphasised that Tarporley is a village not a town.

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The proposed site which CW&C have indicated is their preferred site, in terms of retail planning policy, is a green field off the High Street next to the Church. The site drops down significantly from the High Street.

Parking would include 70 spaces in the free community car park and 100 spaces in the store car park, staff will be encouraged to walk but there will be capacity for staff parking.

Aldi have a strong recruitment policy to recruit locally and each member of staff will have a personal travel plan to reduce reliance on cars. Aldi are a local store for local people staffed by local people.

A store of the proposed size would have 3 deliveries a day plus a dairy delivery, times vary but would reflect the residential nature of the area so might be 7am and 9pm, deliveries are done by a standard 16.5m articulated lorry. Concerns were raised about the curve in the road and lack of visibility which has resulted in accidents in the past. It was stated the visibility at the access would need to be improved and this would improve general visibility around the curve. Also the access would be designed so lorries did not move onto the other side of the road to access or exit the site.

The store would have standard opening hours 8am until 10pm and 10am until 4pm on Sundays.

The store would employ 40 full and part time staff, 1 manager, 3 or 4 assistant managers and a team of deputy managers plus one caretaker, Aldi also run an apprentice scheme. There would most likely be 15 staff in at one time on a Saturday. Each member of staff would have an individual travel plan for getting to work.

It was noted the Winsford store has 76 parking spaces and Tarvin Road 87, although there is a total of 226 available at Tarvin Road.

The store being built at Broughton Park will have equivalent floor space but is a taller more imposing building so as to be noticeable, the new Oswestry store is of equivalent size. The store would be bigger than the Crewe store which is 1140sqm, the proposed Tarporley Store is 1254sqm.

It was suggested any design should include bricks and be well landscaped.

It was noted the brick barn on the site will not be part of the proposed Aldi development site and a 'notional' access has been included on the plans, the barn will be retained by the current landowner.

It was suggested a more sympathetic design would be required, which should be simple but not a pastiche of Tarporley. It was stated the Neighbourhood Plan does not support flat roofs. Any design should take into account the proximity and sensitivity of the Church, grave yard and Manor House and how they relate to the village as a whole.

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It was suggested there would be a 90 minutes or 2 hour time limit of the store car park allowing people to shop in the store then go onto High Street although there would be no limit for blue badge holders, the community car park would have no time limit. The average time spent in Aldi is 23 minutes.

The Community Car Park would be protected as a car park for perpetuity and possibly gifted to the Parish Council.

It was noted that the landscaping had not been worked up at this stage in the process but there would be landscaping on all the boundaries. It was noted that the barn boundary would need to be landscaped and maintained.

It was asked why the store had been positioned as it was on the site, this had been done to be less prominent and also provide a blank elevation towards the church etc rather than a shop front.

It was suggested in the light of comments made the design and suggested materials would be revised.

The sign shown on the images was not appropriate for the location.

Concerns were raised regarding the traffic (deliveries and customers) the store would generate and the impact this would have on Tarporley High Street.

It was asked why other out of village brown field sites were not being considered. This was a reflection of CW&C retail policy which identifies High Streets as preferred retail locations.

It was noted that the store would not attract passing traffic due to the by-pass.

It was noted a large proportion of Tarporley residents like Tarporley due to its bespoke, independent shops and have their 'big shops' delivered.

It was stated that the High Street is struggling, once the living wage is introduced this will put more pressure on retailers who are unable to grow their customer bases due to the lack of parking.

It was stated even after further work is done to the design and this is presented to the public Aldi would still be willing to make changes and are willing to listen to the community.

It was confirmed that Aldi had made representations on the Neighbourhood Plan consultation but these had not been site specific. Their comment was that the settlement boundary is too tight and as the population grows there will be a need to provide further services.

It was stated that the Neighbourhood Plan survey had shown that residents did not want a chain retail outlet but preferred a mix of independent retailers.

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It was stated that if a large proportion of the community at the public exhibition are against the development, possibly 30% of the 3000 population it is unlikely the scheme would be developed further.

It was asked what impact the store would have on the existing Spar and Coop. It was suggested that there would be little impact as Aldi do not sell branded products (the amount of branded products sold is capped at 5%) and are therefore not in direct competition. It was noted that Neston has an Aldi and Sainsbury's and the town centre is now dead.

It was suggested that alternative sites should also be presented at the public exhibition or consultation.

It was explained the proposed store is bigger than Knutsford as the new stores although selling the same range of products now sell more fresh goods which require fridges that take up more space and have wider aisles to make them a more comfortable shopping experience.

A new Aldi will attract more residents to stay in Tarporley to shop benefitting all the shops, without a draw of that nature and additional parking Tarporley High Street might be dead in five years.

It was proposed that the plans will now be reworked and that there would be a public exhibition in a few months time.

Ann Wright
22nd September 2015