

1.0 THE APPEAL SITE

- 1.1 The appeal premises are located on the west side of Southampton Road south of the junction of Southampton Road and Mansfield Road in Ringwood Town Centre.
- 1.2 The appeal premises are located in a Primary Shopping Area and Ringwood Conservation Area as defined by the New Forest Local Plan First Alteration.

2.0 RATIONALE FOR THE PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The appeal premises were previously occupied by Woolworths, which ceased trading in January 2009. The store was acquired by Iceland along with fifty other Woolworth stores in various high street locations throughout the U.K. The development for which planning permission has been refused is required to convert a former department store to a modern convenience retail store.

3.0 PLANNING APPLICATION

- 3.1 The application relating to this appeal was validated, under reference 09/94348 on 31 July 2009 with the following description:-

"Proposal: New shopfront; roller shutter; air conditioning".

- 3.2 The former Woolworths store had multiple entrances within a single central recess onto Southampton Road. To convert the premises for use as a food store, the recessed entrance has been removed. The shop front is sited at the back of the pavement and a single entrance located in an offset position in order to provide level access to satisfy disability access requirements as well as to accommodate the tills and a bag packing area, not required by the previous occupier's business. It was intended that the entrance would be

secured by a roller shutter door, glazed and perforated to retain an active frontage when the premises were closed. The air conditioning ducting is located on the flat roof section at the rear of the building. It is in a concealed position and not visible from Southampton Road.

4.0 GROUNDS OF APPEAL

4.1 The Refusal Notice dated 25 September 2009 identifies one reason for refusal. This reason for refusal is:

“By virtue of the unsympathetic design and the unbalanced form of the shopfront and the use of a roller shutter door, it appears out of context with and detracts from the proportions and character of this element of the building which is prominent in the street scene to the detriment of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. By reason of their inappropriate and unsympathetic appearance, siting and materials, the air ducting attached to the conditioning unit and surrounding fencing has an unacceptable visual impact on the character and appearance of the existing building and to the wider Conservation Area, both detracting from and failing to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. For this reason the proposal is contrary to Policies DW-E1, DW-E23 and DW-E25 of the adopted New Forest District Local Plan First Alteration and adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance Shopfront Design Guide and Ringwood Conservation Area Appraisal”.

4.2 The appellant contends that the proposal is contrary to the policies quoted and the proposal does not harm the appearance or character of the Conservation Area. The grounds for this appeal are outlined below.

Shopfront

- 4.3 The proposed shopfront is a red aluminium shopfront with a recessed doorway, the previous Woolworth's shopfront was aluminium with a recessed doorway. In terms of materials and design there is little difference between the proposed and existing.
- 4.4 The proposal incorporates an offset recessed customer entrance. The offset entrance is necessary to accommodate the appellant's business in terms of an area for tills and bag packing, not required by the previous occupier. Offset entrances are common place throughout the Conservation area to both historic and more modern retail premises. An offset entrance is not uncharacteristic of this Conservation Area.
- 4.5 The proposed shopfront preserves the character of the Conservation Area in the context of the previous shopfront, other shopfronts in close vicinity to the premises and acknowledgement in the Conservation Area Appraisal that Southampton Road "provides an unattractive environment". The proposed shopfront preserves the character of the Conservation Area.

Roller Shutter

- 4.6 The proposed roller shutter is a necessary security feature of the store in order, primarily to reduce anti-social behaviour in the doorway. The shutter is of the punched and glazed form which maintains an active frontage and is not of the solid type referred in the published design guidance. It is only located over the doorway and does not deter window shopping.
- 4.7 The type of shutter proposed does not conflict with policy.

Air Conditioning Units

- 4.8 The appellant specialises in the sale of frozen food. The appeal store is equipped with seventy four frozen range cabinets and nine chiller units. An air conditioning system is essential to provide a satisfactory and comfortable shopping environment for customers on account of the heat generated by freezer cabinets and chiller units in the store. The air conditioning system is not visible from Southampton Road. There is ducting on the roof but the equipment does not stand out, is essential to the operation of the store.

Policy

- 4.9 The appellant will make reference to National Planning Policy PPS6 – Planning for Town Centres and PPG15 – Planning and the Historic Environment. The re-occupation of this former Woolworths store and the investment which Iceland has committed to refitting, refurbishment and general improvement of the property supports National Planning Policy objectives, which is to strengthen town centres, and maintain their vitality and viability. The appeal proposal is also in accordance with PPG15, which supports the reuse of buildings in Conservation Areas. Reference will also be made to relevant policy at a local and regional level.