

# London Borough of Harrow Local Plan Examination

Examination Hearing Statement

Matter 8 – Employment, Retail and Town Centre Matters

Aldi Stores Limited

June 2025

## **Matter 8: Employment, Retail and Town Centre Matters**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 These representations have been prepared by Avison Young ('AY') on behalf of Aldi Stores Limited ('Aldi') who are the freehold owners of the Marsh Lane Gas Holders Site (the 'Site'). The Site is allocated for residential development in the draft Local Plan (Site Allocation O19 Marsh Lane Gas Holders).
- 1.2 The landowners undertook pre-application discussions with the London Borough of Harrow (LBH) over the period 2023 to 2024 with regards to the redevelopment of the site to provide a new Aldi store and associated car parking on the site. These meetings took place prior to the publication of the Regulation 19 Local Plan which identified the site for residential development.
- 1.3 AY submitted representations to the LBH regarding the potential of this site being brought forward for redevelopment at the Regulation 18 (for retail development) and Regulation 19 (refuting the residential allocation and reiterating the proposed retail development) stage consultations. The purpose of these representations was to identify that the site was a suitable location for a new Aldi store, to help ensure that the Local Plan was progressed on a sound basis and that it provides a robust policy basis for the determination of a future planning application for the Site.
- 1.4 Following these pre-application discussions and scheme development, an application to redevelop the site to provide a new Aldi store along with associated car parking and other works has now been submitted and validated by the LBH. The application reference is PL/1370/25 and the target determination date is the 25 July 2025.
- 1.5 This Statement is intended to be read in conjunction with our Regulation 18 and Regulation 19 representations.
- 1.6 We have structured this Statement in accordance with the relevant Issues and Questions for Matter 8.

### **2. Policy LE1: Development Principles and Town Centre Hierarchy**

#### **Question 14.09: Is Part G of the policy a justified approach?**

- 2.1 Paragraph 91 of the NPPF is clear that Local Planning Authorities (LPA's) should apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses which are neither in an existing centre nor in accordance with an up-to-date plan.
- 2.2 In order to be justified, the policy should be appropriate and based on proportionate evidence. Policy LE1(G) states that "*proposals for new retail and leisure development in out-of-centre locations will be resisted*" and is in direct conflict to the NPPF which sets out the criteria which should be met to assess out-of-centre developments, there should be no

policy presumption that out-of-centre developments will be resisted. The Planning System should not be used to prejudge development.

- 2.3 The Harrow Site Selection Methodology (Reg 22 – Feb 2025) Final (EBH01), identifies that the Marsh Lane Gas Holders has been identified as a result of the call for sites process, the notes indicate that *“the call for sites submission on this site was for a supermarket, but the site was assessed as not suitable for this use as it is out of centre. It was assessed as suitable for residential”* (page 26). The fact that the site is in an out-of-centre location does not preclude it from retail development providing compliance with the necessary sequential and impact assessments are met. Out-of-centre sites can be suitable for retail development. Separate representations have been submitted in relation to the allocation of the site for residential development (Matter 6).
- 2.4 There is no evidence base that supports the stance that out-of-centre retail development should be resisted.

**(c) Be supported by a Green Travel Plan to enhance sustainable access between the site and the town centre network.**

- 2.5 Policy LE1(G)(c) requires out-of-centre development to be supported by a Green Travel Plan to enhance sustainable access between the site and the town centre network. There is no definition of “Green Travel Plan” within Appendix 1: Glossary of the Local Plan and therefore, it is unclear what would be required in such a document. A Travel Plan is defined in the Glossary as:

*“A long-term management strategy for an organisation or site that seeks to deliver sustainable transport objectives and is regularly reviewed.”*

- 2.6 It is noted that Policy M1(B) (Sustainable Transport) requires the submission of a Travel Plan with any major development. In the absence of any guidance as to what constitutes a “Green Travel Plan” this reference should be removed. It is noted that all major developments in any event would need to be accompanied by a Travel Plan. Therefore, specific reference to the requirement for a Green Travel Plan is not required as this is addressed elsewhere in the Local Plan.

**3. Summary**

- 3.1 Part G of Policy LE1 prejudices the suitability of out-of-centre sites for retail and leisure development. The Policy should recognise that there is the potential for out-of-centre sites to be appropriate for retail and leisure development subject to meeting the necessary tests, the use of the word “resisted” should be removed. Policy LE1(G) as currently drafted is not compliant with the Council’s own evidence base or the NPPF and prejudices the development potential of out-of-centre sites.
- 3.2 Reference to the requirement to provide a Green Travel Plan should be removed, there is no definition of what comprises a Green Travel Plan and therefore there is no certainty for

applicants in terms of the information that would be required. There is already a requirement to provide a Travel Plan for major development.

**Avison Young**

**June 2025**