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|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Application Number:</b>                      | P/FUL/2024/04629                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Webpage:</b>                                 | <a href="https://planning.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/">https://planning.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Site address:</b>                            | 26 Canford Bottom Colehill BH21 2HE                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Proposal:</b>                                | Demolish existing buildings and construct a Class E(a) retail store and associated parking, servicing arrangements and landscaping                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Applicant name:</b>                          | ALDI Stores Ltd                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Case Officer:</b>                            | Diana Mezzogori-Curran                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Ward Member(s):</b>                          | Cllr Atwal and Cllr Todd                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>No of Site Notices:</b>                      | <p>12 site notices - Displayed on 13.09.2024 in following locations:</p> <p>1 x Henbest Close</p> <p>2 x Stapehill Crescent</p> <p>1 x in front of no. 9 Canford Bottom</p> <p>1 x junction with Dales Drive/Dales Close</p> <p>1 x Fryer's Copse</p> <p>2 x by no. 32 and 26-30 Canford Bottom</p> <p>1 x next to no. 24 Canford Bottom</p> <p>1 x Sycamore Place</p> <p>1 x Fox Lane</p> <p>1 x Wyelands Avenue</p> |
| <b>SN displayed and press advert reasoning:</b> | The application was advertised by means of site notices and press advert for awareness.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

**1. Reason application is going to committee:**

This application is before committee for consideration, at the request of the Service Manager for Development Management and Enforcement.

**2. Summary of recommendation:**

REFUSE - Inappropriate development in the Green Belt (see full reasons for refusal in section 18 of this report).

**3. Reason for the recommendation**

- The development is considered to be inappropriate development, which is by definition harmful to the Green Belt.
- Impact on the openness of the Green Belt.
- Loss of employment land without sufficient justification.

- Very special circumstances do not exist, as the harm to the openness of the Green Belt, the harm to the character of the area and any other harm is not clearly outweighed by the proposed benefits

**Officer Note:**

As the proposed development constitutes inappropriate development within the Green Belt, it falls under paragraph 4 of the Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2024. Therefore, if the Committee is minded to approve the application contrary to the officer's recommendation, the local planning authority must refer the application to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

The Secretary of State will then decide whether to call in the application for determination, which may include a public inquiry. This process is in accordance with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2024.

**4. Key planning issues**

| Issue                                    | Conclusion                                                                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Principle of development                 | UNACCEPTABLE<br><br>Conflicts with Policies KS2, KS3, KS6 and PC2 of the Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy.                                                            |
| Impact on the Openness of the Green Belt | UNACCEPTABLE<br><br>Inappropriate development causing harm to the openness of the Green Belt, both spatially and visually, which is not clearly outweighed by proposed benefits |
| Employment land                          | UNACCEPTABLE<br><br>Loss of employment land not sufficiently justified                                                                                                          |
| Need for Retail Provision                | UNACCEPTABLE<br><br>No demonstratable retail need identified in this location.                                                                                                  |

| Issue                                          | Conclusion                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Design and impact on the character of the area | <p>ACCEPTABLE</p> <p>The site is visually contained, and the development is unlikely to have a significant impact on the wider landscape character or nationally designated sites - subject to conditions</p> |
| Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)          | <p>ACCEPTABLE</p> <p>Concluded that the proposal does not require an Environmental Impact Statement</p>                                                                                                       |
| Impact on local centres                        | <p>ACCEPTABLE</p> <p>Proposed store would result in adverse but not significantly adverse impacts on local centres as per paragraph 95 of the NPPF.</p>                                                       |
| Impact on protected trees                      | <p>ACCEPTABLE</p> <p>Trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) proposed for removal are of limited Arboricultural value and do not merit TPO designation – subject to conditions</p>                   |
| Access, Highway Safety and Parking             | <p>ACCEPTABLE</p> <p>Does not cause severe harm to the highway network – subject to conditions.</p>                                                                                                           |
| Neighbouring Amenity                           | <p>ACCEPTABLE</p>                                                                                                                                                                                             |

| Issue                           | Conclusion                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                 | Does not cause harm to neighbouring amenity that would warrant refusal – subject to conditions.                                                                                                                          |
| Impact on flooding and drainage | <p>ACCEPTABLE</p> <p>Subject to conditions requiring a detailed surface water management scheme for the site and a maintenance and management scheme for the surface water management scheme.</p>                        |
| Impact on biodiversity          | <p>ACCEPTABLE</p> <p>Subject to the implementation of the approved Biodiversity Plan and securing off-site Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) via legal agreement.</p>                                                          |
| Impact on protected sites       | <p>ACCEPTABLE</p> <p>No harm to protected sites identified</p>                                                                                                                                                           |
| Waste                           | <p>ACCEPTABLE</p> <p>Subject to condition requiring submission of a detailed strategy.</p>                                                                                                                               |
| Land contamination              | <p>ACCEPTABLE</p> <p>Subject to condition requiring additional ground investigations prior to the commencement of development; a watching brief and monitoring condition to deal with unexpected land contamination.</p> |

| Issue                      | Conclusion                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Very Special Circumstances | Considered that very special circumstances do not exist as harm to the openness of the Green Belt, and any other harm, is not clearly outweighed by other material considerations. |

## 5. Description of site

- 5.1 The site is situated to the east of the Canford Bottom roundabout, which serves as a junction for the A31(T) and the B3073. The site is irregular in shape and covers an area of roughly 2.65 acres. The surrounding area comprises a mix of employment buildings, residential properties, and open countryside.
- 5.2 The site is divided into two sections. The northern section is currently occupied by an Accident and Repair Centre, which includes several employment buildings and associated hard-standing areas. The use of this section of the site is classified under use class B2 (General Industrial) or Sui Generis (in a class of its own). The existing buildings are primarily used for industrial purposes, contributing to the local employment landscape. This section of the site is within the Colehill urban area and is an allocated employment site (LA/COLE/21 – Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)).
- 5.3 The southern section of the site is predominantly grassland and scrubland, bordered by mature trees. This section falls within the Green Belt, which imposes certain restrictions on development to preserve the openness and prevent urban sprawl. The natural vegetation and trees in this area provide a buffer and contribute to the site's ecological value.
- 5.4 To the north-east, adjacent to the site, are additional employment buildings, which form part of the local industrial infrastructure. To the north and west, the site is bordered by existing residential properties of lower density, mostly bungalows. The site is located to the north of the Canford Bottom roundabout, a significant traffic junction that defines the southern boundary, facilitating access and connectivity.
- 5.5 Beyond the immediate surroundings of residential and industrial buildings, the area is characterised by open countryside, particularly to the north, east, and south, offering a scenic and rural backdrop.
- 5.6 The closest Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is Ferndown Common, approximately 2 km to the east. The site is beyond 400m but within the 5km buffer to the Dorset Heaths Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Dorset Heathlands Special Protection Area (SPA), and Ramsar sites (Slop Bog & Uddens Heaths – 2.3 km NE; Holt & West Moors Heaths – 3 km north; Corfe & Burrows Hills – 4 km SW; and Canford Heath – 4 km south).

## 6. Description of development

- 6.1 Full planning permission is sought for the demolition of existing buildings and the construction of a Class E(a) food store, along with associated works including parking, servicing arrangements, and landscaping. The proposed store building would have a 1,315 sqm retail

area and a total area of 1,780 sqm, including a warehouse, freezer/chiller, welfare areas and loading bay.

- 6.2 The building would be single-storey with a maximum height of approximately 6.3m. The length of the building is approximately 64.5m (including the lorry bay) and the width approximately 32m. The single-storey store will feature a grey brickwork plinth and modern grey cladding, with a dark grey pitched flat roof and roof-mounted solar PV panels. The south-east and south-west elevations would include supermarket (Aldi) logo signage and a pole sign to the south-west by the new vehicle access. These will need separate advertisement consent.
- 6.3 The proposal will include a total of 120 parking spaces, comprising 103 standard spaces, 7 parent-child spaces, 4 electric charging spaces, 20 passive electric vehicle charging spaces, and 6 disabled spaces. Cycle parking provision will include 4 Sheffield hoops (8 cycle spaces) and 3 staff cycle spaces within the store.
- 6.4 The application includes the formation of a new two-way access and pedestrian entrance at the south-west boundary (off Canford Bottom), replacing an existing field access, while the current vehicular access to the north will be closed. The proposal also includes a landscaping scheme and ancillary facilities including trolley storage areas and a substation.
- 6.5 In terms of biodiversity net gain, the statutory biodiversity metric indicates a net biodiversity loss of 39.86%. To address this deficit, the applicant has committed to a combination of on-site mitigation measures and an off-site biodiversity contribution facilitated through 'the Environment Bank'. 'The Environment Bank' is a UK-based organisation that enables developers to offset biodiversity losses by investing in accredited nature restoration projects elsewhere, thereby ensuring compliance with national biodiversity net gain requirements.

## 7. Relevant planning history

| Application reference | Proposal                                                                            | Decision                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Decision date |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| P/PAP/2023/00150      | Proposed development of land to provide a new Class E(a) discount food store (Aldi) | <p><b>Written response</b></p> <p><u>Officer comments:</u></p> <p><i>Advised that as the site is situated within the South East Dorset Green Belt it does not benefit from any of the exceptions set out in the NPPF for development. The applicant would therefore need to demonstrate very special circumstances exist to justify development in the Green Belt.</i></p> | 02/06/2023    |

|                |                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |            |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 3/19/1230/PAM  | Demolish commercial building and erect new development (with on site meeting) (Residential) | <b>Written response</b><br><u>Officer comments:</u><br><i>Advised that as the site is situated within the South East Dorset Green Belt it does not benefit from any of the exceptions set out in the NPPF for development. The applicant would therefore need to demonstrate very special circumstances exist to justify development in the Green Belt.</i> | 13/11/2019 |
| 03/98/0254/FUL | Replace Existing Offices with A Jackleg Portacabin                                          | <b>Approved</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 06/05/1998 |
| 03/95/9015/HST | Use Of Premises For Clas B2 General Industrial Purposes                                     | <b>Lawful</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |            |
| 03/94/0412/FUL | Replace Existing Offices With A Jackleg Portacabin                                          | <b>Approved</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 01/07/1994 |

## 8. List of constraints

- South East Dorset Green Belt
- TPO (EDDC/HA/56)
- Wessex Water Treatment Works Catchment
- Southern Gas Network: - Medium pressure gas pipeline 25m or less from Medium Pressure Pipelines (75mbar - 2 bar); - Distance: 12.1
- Bournemouth Water Consultation Area
- Dorset Council Land (Dedicated): Land dedicated for road widening at 24 Canford Bottom, Colehill - Reference 02326
- Wildlife Present: S41 - Slow-worm and - Adder
- Dorset Heathlands - 5km Heathland Buffer
- Scheduled Monument: Bowl barrow 25m north west of Stapehill Village Hall (List Entry: 1015789.0); - Distance: 407.65
- Environment Agency : Risk of Surface Water Flooding Extent 1 in 100, 1 in 1000, surface water flooding 1 in 100 year event plus 20% allowance and 1 in 100 year event plus 40% allowance

- Contaminated Land

## 9. Consultations

All consultee responses can be viewed in full on the website.

### Consultees

#### 1. Ward Councillor – Cllr Todd – OBJECT

Comments received 17.09.2024

- I would like to refer this matter to committee as a matter of urgency.
- Objection on the following grounds:
  - Not sufficient consideration has been given to the impact such a development will have on a number of factors not least the traffic patterns and increase in vehicle movements both on Canford Bottom Roundabout, Middle Hill Road and the surrounding routes into Wimborne Minster.

#### 2. Colehill Parish Council – OBJECT

Comments received 12.09.2024

- Objection on the following grounds:
  - Site is within the South East Dorset Green Belt
  - Increased traffic and congestion
  - Traffic will come through the village rather than along the bypass
  - Inappropriate location for supermarket so close to bottleneck roundabout

#### 3. National Highways – NO OBJECTION subject to conditions

Comments received on 25.09.2024

- National Highways raised several concerns and recommendations regarding the proposed development:
  - Proximity to A31 Canford Bottom Roundabout
  - Traffic impact and safety
  - Site access
  - Trip generation and distribution
  - Surface water drainage
- Recommends not granting permission pending further information on traffic impacts and site access.
- Submission of revised PICADY modelling, assessment of future year impacts, and detailed surface water drainage design.

National Highways : Further comments received on 25.03.2025

- Continue to object requesting further information is submitted to address outstanding issues related to traffic modelling, junction design, and internal site layout.

National Highways: Final comments received on 02.05.2025

A new priority junction onto Canford Bottom (C50) is proposed, located around 75m from the A31 Canford Bottom roundabout.

- Initial concerns were raised regarding traffic modelling, access junction design, and internal site layout.
- The applicant submitted a further transport technical note (TN2) addressing most concerns.
- The junction design has been revised and approved by Dorset Council.
- National Highways requests Dorset Council to consider implementing waiting and loading restrictions to prevent inappropriate parking.
- Revised swept path plans indicate potential conflicts with service/delivery vehicle movements, recommending a Delivery and Service Management Plan.
- The development site shares a boundary with the SRN, requiring compliance with DfT Circular 01/2022.
- Concerns with proposed planting species near the SRN; specific species should not be planted within 10m of the estate.
- The proposed post and rail fence and native hedge are inadequate for screening; a close-boarded boundary fence is likely required.
- Surface water drainage strategy involves an underground geocellular attenuation tank discharging into Wessex Water's system.
- Insufficient information on exceedance flows; a detailed surface water drainage design is required.
- External lighting should minimise light spill towards the A31.
- Any signage must be located within the applicant's or third-party land, not within highway land.
- Planning conditions recommended for access, surface water drainage, boundary treatments and landscaping, delivery and service management, and external lighting.

**4. Natural England (NE) – No further comments to make beyond NE general advice**

Comments received on 08.07.2025

- The proposed development is not likely to result in significant impacts on nationally or internationally designated nature conservation sites or designated landscapes.

**5. WPA Consultants Ltd – Comments (Contamination conditions required)**

Comments received on 03.10.2025

- Concerns raised about land contamination based on a report by Earth Environmental and Geotechnical (Southern) Ltd from October 2023.

- The report generally indicates low risk but identifies hydrocarbon contamination at sample locations WS2 and WS3, suggesting potential fuel leakage from storage facilities.
- The report also notes that some areas of the site may not be represented in the data and mentions the potential presence of fuel storage tanks.
- Further investigation to determine the sources and extent of hydrocarbon contamination is recommended to be conditioned prior to commencement.
- A watching brief by a qualified consultant is also essential prior to commencement.
- Council's contaminated land planning conditions should be applied to any approval.

**6. Bournemouth Water Ltd (South West Water) – No comments to offer**

Response received on 18.09.2024.

**7. Wessex Water – No objection**

Comments received on 15.10.2024

- The storm and foul connections are acceptable

**8. Scottish And Southern Energy (SSEN) -sub-stations – Comment**

Comments received on 06.09.2024

- SSEN would like to highlight the Canford Bottom substation to the north east of the application site, as well as the low voltage underground cable hugging the southern periphery of the site.

**9. SGN (Southern Gas Networks)**

No comments received

**10. Dorset Fire & Rescue Service**

No comments received

**11. Amphibian & Reptile Trust (ARC)**

No comments received

**12. Dorset Police Architectural Liaison Officer**

No comments received

**13. Dorset Council (DC) – Highways**

Comments received on 18.06.2025 – **NO OJECTION subject to conditions**

- The proposed site access junction can accommodate expected traffic levels without significant delays.

- Mitigation includes a new signal-controlled pedestrian crossing; a Toucan crossing was considered but not implemented.
- The development is supported by a Travel Plan to promote non-car travel.
- National Highways has removed their objection subject to conditions and requests Dorset Council consider parking restrictions near the proposed access.
- Conditions recommended include access construction, visibility splays, sustainable transport links, a Construction Traffic Management Plan, a Delivery Management Plan, Travel Plan implementation, and cycle parking facilities.

#### **14. DC - Natural Environment Team – NO OBJECTION subject to conditions and completion of S106 Agreement**

Comments received on 20.03.2025

- Ecology - Dorset Council Natural Environment Team approved the EclA for this application and issued a Certificate of Approval on 20 March 2025 (attached for ease). We recommend that the implementation in full of the approved EclA is a condition of any approval, to ensure compliance with wildlife legislation, local policy, NPPF (2023) and Natural England Protected Species Standing Advice. The EclA includes provision to produce the following documents, we recommend that the submission to and approval by the LPA of these documents is subject to separate conditions;
  - Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP)
  - Reptile Mitigation Strategy
  - Lighting strategy
- Biodiversity Net Gain - Information provided in the BNG statement and supported by the Metric calculation shows that the proposals qualify as significant on-site enhancement, in particular: enhancement of other neutral grassland from poor to moderate condition and creation of low distinctiveness native hedgerow. Therefore, the proposal meets the following criteria for significant on-site enhancement:
  - Enhancements to habitat condition
  - Habitats of low distinctiveness which create a large number of biodiversity units relative to the biodiversity value of the site before development.
- As a result, habitat management of the enhancement of the on-site other neutral grassland and creation of native hedgerows must be secured for minimum of 30 years with a Section 106 agreement and a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP)
- The requirement for offsite units to obtain the 10% net gain in relation to habitats must also be secured.
- Evidence of their purchase must be provided at the pre-commencement stage.

#### **15. DC - Trees (East & Purbeck) – NO OBJECTION subject to conditions**

Comments received on 01.11.2024 – Objection, further information required

- Mature trees to the north are protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). The site, located within the greenbelt, has highly visible trees that are essential to the area's character and should be retained as much as possible.
- An updated arboricultural impact assessment is needed, as many trees, particularly early mature/semi-mature Oak trees along the southern side, were not included in the initial survey.
- An arboricultural method statement and tree protection plan are missing and must be submitted for proposals involving tree retention.
- The current landscaping scheme is inadequate, lacking suitable new tree planting along the southern side near Canford Bottom Roundabout. Robust, year-round screening planting is required, and smaller species like Cherry, Hornbeam, and Field Maple are insufficient. More prominent species are needed to maintain the area's green character.

DC Trees (East and Purbeck) : Further comments received on 28.02.2025

- No objection to tree removal but concerns about tree protection measures and landscaping
- Need for robust protection measures and compliance with standards
- Requirement for a detailed landscaping scheme with suitable tree species
- Proposed Conditions: Pre-commencement site meeting, updated drainage plan, and robust tree protection measures

DC Trees (East and Purbeck): Further comments received on 08.07.2025

- A condition to be included requiring a revised landscape scheme to be submitted and agreed to ensure that any revised scheme meets National Highways requirements in terms of suitable species selection.

## **16. DC - Planning Policy – General comments**

Comments received on 10.10.2024

- Proposal is for the development of approximately 1,800 sqm of retail floorspace on part of an active employment site and part of the site located in the Green Belt.
- Consider whether sufficient evidence has been submitted to justify the loss of an active employment site, if there are more sequentially preferable sites, if the proposal will have a significant adverse impact on town centres, and if the proposal meets the requirements of the NPPF and PPG for release of Green Belt land.
- Further evidence may be required

## **17. DC - Flood Risk Management (Local Lead Flood Authority (LLFA)) – NO OBJECTION subject to conditions**

Comments received on 11 September 2025

- Holding objection until in-principal approval from Wessex Water to connect to the surface water sewer is obtained.

LLFA: Further comments received on 2 December 2024.

- The LLFA received in-principle approval from Wessex Water for the connection to the public surface water sewer. LLFA removed their previous holding objection subject to conditions for the detailed surface water management scheme and maintenance details.

**18. DC – Environmental Services – Protection – NO OBJECTION subject to conditions**

Comments received on 11.09.2024

- The submission includes a two-part Geo Environmental Site Investigation Report that needs to be sent to the Council's contaminated land consultant for further review.
- The noise report meets the required standards, and it is recommended that the suggestions in section 7 are enforced and appropriate clauses are added to ensure these are checked before use begins.
- The Air Quality Impact Assessment also meets the required standards, and it is advised that the mitigation measures in section 6 are enforced.

**19. DC Landscape – NO OBJECTION subject to conditions**

Comments received 05.08.2025

- No objection in principle to the proposed development on landscape or visual grounds subject to conditions relating to the submission, implementation, and maintenance of hard and soft landscaping schemes.

**20. DC - Archaeology - NO OBJECTION**

Comments received 29.07.2025

**21. DC - Dorset Waste Team**

No comments received

**22. DC - Building Control East Team**

No comments received

**23. DC - Highways Asset Manager**

No comments received

**24. Dorset Wildlife Trust**

No comments received

## 25. BCP Council (Poole)

No comments received

### Third Party Concerns

Over 500 comments have been received from local residents and from the wider area. The following is a high-level summary of the comments received and the full comments are available online.

### Objections

|                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Principle of Development</b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The proposal is contrary to local plan retail policy</li><li>• The proposed location is deemed inappropriate due to its proximity to the busy Canford Bottom roundabout, causing safety and congestion issues.</li><li>• The site is too close to residential areas, increasing the risk of accidents and disrupting the local community</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Impact on Green Belt</b>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The proposed development is deemed inappropriate in the Green Belt.</li><li>• Loss of part of the Green Belt.</li><li>• development encroaching on Green Belt land, which is valued for its environmental and aesthetic benefits</li><li>• Part of the site lies within the South East Dorset Green Belt. If classified as "Grey Belt," development still requires a demonstrable unmet need.</li></ul>                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Impact on ecology</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Harmful impact on local ecology</li><li>• Negative impact on wildlife</li><li>• Loss of a wildlife corridor</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Impact on the character of the area</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Proposal would have a harmful visual impact on the character of the area</li><li>• The development is seen as contributing to overdevelopment, which could change the character of Colehill from a village to a more urban area</li><li>• The proposed building will be out of character for the small area and detract from the natural rural environment.</li><li>• Concerns regarding the loss of mature trees on the site</li><li>• The proposed offering of trees and shrubs does not substitute for the greenery lost</li></ul> |
| <b>Impact on local amenity</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pollution arising from increased traffic visiting supermarket</li><li>• Noise levels arising from supermarket and deliveries</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

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|                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased light pollution from the store and its operations. Bright lights from the parking area and moving vehicles would distract drivers and nearby properties.</li> <li>• Light intrusion from traffic signals particularly at night.</li> <li>• The proximity of the crossing and store entrance will result in a loss of privacy.</li> <li>• Concerns are raised about potential surveillance measures affecting quality of life.</li> <li>• The removal of trees would increase noise and air pollution for local residents and contribute to blocked drains and increased road maintenance costs.</li> <li>• Increased traffic will impact local roads, causing bottlenecks and delays.</li> <li>• Surveillance and security measures may infringe on residents' privacy.</li> <li>• Impact on neighbouring property values</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Safety concerns</b>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proposed entrance lacks adequate pedestrian crossings and safety measures.</li> <li>• The site access junction will be located opposite a couple of private driveways and a small private service road</li> <li>• Dangerous Entry/Exit Points: The proposed entrance is on a dangerous blind bend, leading to potential accidents and near misses</li> <li>• Concerns about emergency vehicle access due to increased congestion.</li> <li>• Safety concerns for pedestrians and cyclists due to narrow pavements and lack of crossings</li> <li>• Increased danger for pedestrians, cyclists, and road users due to traffic congestion and accidents</li> <li>• The increased traffic from the store is expected to pose safety risks for local school children walking to and from school. This could lead to more parents driving children to school adding to the congestion</li> <li>• Replacement of a Toucan crossing with a Pelican crossing raises safety and accessibility concerns.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Crime and anti-social behaviour</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for increased crime and anti-social behaviour associated with the development</li> <li>• Calls for a thorough impact assessment and consideration of alternative solutions that would better serve the community without compromising traffic flow, residential quality of life, and environmental sustainability.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Highway safety and parking</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concerns about increased traffic and accidents due to the attraction of passing traffic on the A31</li> <li>• Concerns about increased traffic complexity on the Canford Bottom roundabout, which is already prone to frequent accidents</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

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|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concerns about the impact on Canford Bottom and Middle Hill, leading to traffic congestion and use of local roads as cut-throughs</li> <li>Concerns about increased vehicular traffic in an already congested area, the proximity to schools, and the residential nature of the neighbourhood</li> <li>The existing traffic already exceeds the capacity of the residential road, and the A31 bypass stretches have been over-capacity for many years.</li> <li>Concerns about the accuracy of traffic assessments and modelling.</li> <li>Proposed parking below required standard, it will lead to overspill onto residential roads</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Public transport</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Site is not well-served by public transport, making it less accessible for those without cars.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Retail need and local economy</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No economic need for another supermarket given the existing options in nearby areas.</li> <li>The catchment area analysis in submitted Planning &amp; Retail Statement is inconsistent and based on outdated data (UK2023 instead of UK2024).</li> <li>Trade diversion assumptions appear unrealistic.</li> <li>Development prioritizes corporate profit over the well-being of the local economy</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Impact on existing businesses</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The new supermarket could negatively affect existing local stores, potentially leading to closures</li> <li>The survival of local shops and the loss of community services they provide, such as post offices</li> <li>Potential job losses at existing local stores (One Stop, Spar, Co-op)</li> <li>The financial impact assessment should use locally-derived data rather than UK averages for online shopping rates.</li> <li>The assessment should be updated with the latest data from Experian Retail Planner 22.</li> <li>The projected trade impact on Waitrose is underestimated; a more realistic scenario should consider a higher trade draw from Waitrose and other local stores.</li> <li>Insufficient Consideration of Linked Shopping Trips</li> <li>The loss of linked trips to Waitrose and Co-Op, which act as anchor stores, could significantly impact the vitality and viability of Wimborne Minster town centre.</li> <li>The potential loss of linked trip spending has not been adequately considered in the impact assessment.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Loss of employment land</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Required 12-month marketing evidence to demonstrate lack of demand for employment use not provided</li> <li>Contrary to CS Policy PC2</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Drainage and Flooding</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concerns about drainage and sewerage systems being overwhelmed.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

|                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>More suitable alternative locations</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The location is not suitable for the proposed development and recommends alternative locations, such as Wimborne Road West, Leigh Road, or Ferndown Industrial Estate</li> <li>Locations closer to new housing developments would be more appropriate.</li> <li>The new estate on Leigh Road originally had a supermarket in its plan, which was later changed to a care home</li> <li>Site at Brook Road would be better suited to the development</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Job loss</b>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concerns that claims to create new jobs may offset the potential job losses in existing local businesses</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Other</b>                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased traffic could hinder access for emergency services</li> <li>Area needs more residential rather than commercial development</li> <li>Short-term economic gains are being prioritized over long-term planning goals for sustainable development</li> <li>Residents' opinions are not being adequately considered in the planning process</li> <li>Calls for greater transparency in how planning decisions are made and how public feedback is incorporated</li> <li>Concerns are raised about the adequacy of the consultation process and whether all stakeholders have been properly engaged</li> <li>There are questions about whether planning policies are being applied consistently across different developments</li> </ul> |

### Support

|                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Retail provision</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The store will provide a welcome addition to food shopping options in the area, making it easier for residents to access affordable groceries</li> </ul>                |
| <b>Job creation</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposal will provide new jobs in the area</li> <li>Boosting local economy</li> </ul>                                                                                   |
| <b>Reduction in travel trips</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reducing the need for residents to travel to supermarkets further afield</li> </ul>                                                                                     |
| <b>Sustainability</b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aldi stores are built to be carbon neutral with solar panels, heat recovery systems, and 100% LED lighting</li> <li>Measures to promote cycling and walking.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Biodiversity</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extensive, attractive landscaping around the site providing screening and improved biodiversity</li> </ul>                                                              |
| <b>Improved access/parking</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plans include a new pedestrian crossing and ample free customer parking</li> </ul>                                                                                      |

### General comments

- Supports the idea of an Aldi store within 2 miles of residence, provided the exit and entrance are well considered

## **10. Duties**

- 10.1 S38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that the determination of planning applications must be in accordance with the development plan unless material circumstances indicate otherwise.

## **11. Relevant policies**

### Development plan

The Development plan for this area comprise the adopted Christchurch and East Dorset Local Plan – Part 1 Core Strategy 2014 (CS) and saved policies from the East Dorset Local Plan 2002 (EDLP)

### **Christchurch and East Dorset Local Plan - Part 1 Core Strategy 2014:**

The following policies are considered to be relevant to this proposal:

KS1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development

KS2: Settlement hierarchy

KS3: Green Belt

KS5: Employment Land

PC2: Alternative Uses for Employment Land

KS7: Role of Town and Town Centres

KS11: Transport and development

KS12: Parking provision

HE1: Valuing and conserving our historic environment

HE2: Design of new development

HE3: Landscape quality

ME1: Safeguarding biodiversity and geodiversity

ME2: Dorset heathlands

ME4: Renewable Energy Provision

ME6: Flood management, mitigation and defence

### **The East Dorset Local Plan (2002) (EDLP)**

Policy DES2 - Pollution

Policy DES11 - Enhancing the Environment

Policy LTDEV1 – External Lighting

### Material considerations

#### **Emerging local plans:**

Paragraph 49 of the NPPF provides that local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

- the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
- the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant plan policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and
- the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the NPPF (the closer the policies in the emerging plan are to the policies of the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

#### **The Dorset Council Local Plan**

The Dorset Council Local Plan Options consultation took place between January and March 2021 with further consultation planned between 18 Aug – 13 October 2025. Being at a very early stage of preparation, the relevant policies in the draft plan should be accorded very limited weight in decision making.

#### **National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (as amended 2025)**

Paragraph 11 sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved without delay. Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date then permission should be granted unless specific NPPF policies protecting areas or assets provide a strong reason for refusal and/or any adverse impacts of approval would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the NPPF as a whole, with particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well designed places and providing affordable homes.

Other relevant NPPF sections include:

Section 4 'Decision making': Para 39 - Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available...and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

Section 7 'Ensuring the vitality of town centres' - Paragraph 92 advises that: When considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites which are well connected to the town centre. Applicants and local planning authorities should demonstrate flexibility on issues such as format and scale, so that opportunities to utilise suitable town centre or edge of centre sites are fully explored.

Section 9 'Promoting sustainable transport' - paragraph 116 advises that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network following mitigation, would serve, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios.

Section 12 'Achieving well designed places' This indicates that all development to be of a high quality in design, and the relationship and visual impact of it to be compatible with the surroundings. In particular, and amongst other things, Paragraphs 131 – 141 advise that:

The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design.

Section 13 'Protecting Green Belt Land' indicates that development within the Green Belt will be considered inappropriate and harmful to the openness of the Green Belt unless it falls within narrowly defined categories or unless very special circumstances can be justified to allow the development (paras 153 and 155).

Section 14 'Meeting the challenges of climate change, flooding and coastal change'

Section 15 'Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment'- Paragraphs 192-195 set out how biodiversity is to be protected and encourage net gains for biodiversity.

### **Other material considerations**

Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework 2020-2025 Supplementary Planning Document

Dorset Council Interim Guidance and Position Statement Appendix B: Adopted Local Plan policies and objectives relating to climate change, renewable energy, and sustainable design and construction. December 2023.

Strategic Green Belt Assessment Stage 1 Study (December 2020)

Strategic Green Belt Assessment Stage 2 Harm Assessment (December 2020)

Dorset Retail and Leisure Study (January 2023)

East Dorset Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) 2020/21

Dorset Councils Authority Monitoring Report (April 2024)

Dorset and BCP Employment Land Study (March 2024)

### **National Planning Practice Guidance**

## **12. Human rights**

Article 6 - right to a fair trial.

Article 8 - right to respect for private and family life and home.

The first protocol of Article 1 protection of property.

This recommendation is based on adopted development plan policies, the application of which does not prejudice the human rights of the applicant or any third party.

## **13. Public Sector Equalities Duty**

- 13.1 As set out in the Equalities Act 2010, all public bodies, in discharging their functions must have "due regard" to this duty. There are 3 main aims: -

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people
- Encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where participation is disproportionately low.

13.2 Whilst there is no absolute requirement to fully remove any disadvantage the Duty is to have “regard to” and remove or minimise disadvantage and in considering the merits of this planning application the planning authority has taken into consideration the requirements of the Public Sector Equalities Duty.

13.3 The following will assist in minimising disadvantages and would be secured by condition:

- Access – the store will offer step free access to accommodate users with disabilities and mobility impairments. Parking spaces for disabled users and users with young children will be provided.
- Upgrade to pedestrian crossing – an upgrade to the pedestrian crossing will be provided to give due regard to inclusive mobility if the application were approved.

#### 14. Financial benefits

| What                        | Amount / value                                              |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Material considerations     |                                                             |
| Job creation                | 30-35 Full time jobs<br>(confirmed by applicant 01.08.2025) |
| Temporary job creation      | Employment during construction                              |
| Non material considerations |                                                             |
| CIL contribution            | £138,353.85                                                 |

#### 15. Environmental implications

15.1 The proposed development will result in the loss of a greenfield site and the loss of habitat. However, the development includes compensation for the loss of habitat and biodiversity net gain off-site, which is to be secured by a legal agreement, as well the inclusion of solar PV panels on the roof.

#### 16. Planning Assessment

The main considerations involved with this application are:

- the principle of the development

- impact on the Green Belt and very special circumstances (VSCs)
- the retail need within the plan area
- loss of existing employment land
- the design and form of the proposal and its impact upon the character of the area
- the impact upon neighbouring amenity
- impact on ecology
- impact on protected sites
- impact on protected trees
- highways safety, access and parking
- flood risk and drainage
- planning balance

The following report looks at each material planning consideration in turn. In the interests of clarity, in ascribing weight to the planning considerations in favour and against, the following scale will be used: none, limited, moderate, significant and substantial.

## **16.1 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)**

- 16.1.1 Firstly, the submitted application has been screened for EIA development
- 16.1.2 The proposed development is for a food store with associated parking and landscaping, occupying a total area of 1.07 ha. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises that EIA is more likely if the area of the scheme is more than 5 hectares or the development would have significant urbanising effects in a previously non-urbanised area (e.g. a new development of more than 1,000 dwellings).
- 16.1.3 The EIA screening has concluded the proposed development is considered unlikely to result in the significant use of natural resources, production of waste, pollution or nuisance given the scale and nature of the proposal. An EIA is therefore not required.

## **16.2 Principle of Development**

### **Background**

- 16.2.1 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 says planning applications shall be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Paragraph 12 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up to date development plan, but only if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed.
- 16.2.2 This application seeks full planning permission to erect a food store with a gross internal area of 1,780 sqm (1,315 sqm net) at Canford Bottom. The proposal includes the provision of 120 car parking spaces. The store is designed to allocate approximately 80% of its floorspace (1,052 sqm) to the sale of convenience goods and the remaining 20% (263 sqm) to comparison goods.

### **Hierarchy for retail provision**

- 16.2.3 The southern section of application site (approx. 0.65 ha) is Green Belt (as assessed later in this report).
- 16.2.4 The northern section of application site (approx. 0.26 ha) lies within the urban area of Colehill. Policy KS2 of the Christchurch and east Dorset Core Strategy 2014 (CS) states that the location, scale and distribution of development should conform with the settlement hierarchy, which will also help to inform service providers about the provision of infrastructure, services and facilities.
- 16.2.5 CS Policy KS2 identifies Colehill as a Suburban Centre and notes Suburban Centres are: *'Settlements with no existing centres that will provide for some residential development along with community, leisure and retail facilities to meet day to day needs within the existing urban areas.'* This policy is referenced later in the report under Section 16.4 – Location and Sustainability.
- 16.2.6 Although the site is not located within an area specifically allocated or designated for retail or employment use in the adopted Local Plan (CS), it is currently in active employment use. Furthermore, it lies outside the defined boundary of any recognised town centre. The nearest town centres are Wimborne to the west and Ferndown to the east, both approximately 3 kilometres from the site, although the site benefits from good connectivity to both. In retail planning terms, the site is classified as an out-of-centre location, as it is neither within nor adjacent to a defined town centre.
- 16.2.7 CS Policy KS6 (Town Centre Hierarchy) defines the hierarchy of retail centres, ensuring that most new retail development is directed to the main town centres, which are the most accessible and have the most development opportunities on previously developed land. Policy KS7 focuses on the role of Town and District Centres, aiming to strongly support the vitality and viability of these centres.
- 16.2.8 Furthermore, in order for key retail centres within the plan area to maintain and enhance their vitality and viability, CS Policy KS8 (Future Retail Provision) highlights that additional retail floorspace is needed to accommodate the growing population and increasing retail expenditure. Wimborne and Ferndown are identified as the main focus for additional comparison retail floorspace, with smaller contributions from Verwood and West Moors.
- 16.2.9 In East Dorset, Ferndown, Wimborne Minster and Verwood are identified as town centres and will be the focus for future retail development in the district.
- 16.2.10 In this case, the proposal is for retail development outside the defined settlement boundary and not in line with the Christchurch and East Dorset Local Plan hierarchy for retail provision.
- 16.2.11 The impact of the retail store on the vitality and viability of Wimborne Minster, Ferndown and Verwood is material and is considered in the officer assessment below.

#### Employment land

- 16.2.12 CS Policy KS5 focuses on the provision of employment land in Christchurch and East Dorset. This policy aims to ensure that the employment land meets the needs of the business community while maintaining environmental and community standards.

- 16.2.13 CS Policy PC2 (Alternative Uses for Employment Land Where Justified by Market Evidence) highlights that *where there is strong evidence of the lack of market demand over the plan period (2013 –2028) employment land may be considered for non B use classes*. Para 16.12 of CS further states that the loss of employment land will be considered where there is strong evidence to demonstrate that a site is not required by the market to meet projected land requirements over the plan period.
- 16.2.14 In this case, the northern section of the site is occupied by the Ellford Accident and Repair Centre and associated hard standing (Use Class B2 (General Industrial) or Sui Generis). Therefore, any change of use from employment to retail must be justified. The loss of existing employment land is material and is considered in the officer assessment below.
- 16.2.15 The proposal is contrary to the Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy (2014) and the Town Centre hierarchy as set out in Policy KS6.

### **16.3     Green Belt**

- 16.3.1 As previously noted, the northern part of the application site comprises developed land with two commercial buildings and associated car parking. This section of the site is designated as a 'Main Urban Area' in the adopted Local Plan and does not form part of the Green Belt.
- 16.3.2 The southern section of the site is situated within the South East Dorset Green Belt and lies outside the 'Main Urban Area' as defined in the adopted Local Plan (CS). This part of the site remains undeveloped and open.
- 16.3.3 CS Policy KS3: Green Belt stipulates that development within the East Dorset District and Christchurch Borough will be contained by the South East Dorset Green Belt. It further states that the two most important purposes of the Green Belt in this area are to:
- Protect the separate physical identity of individual settlements in the area by maintaining wedges and corridors of open land between them.
  - To maintain an area of open land around the conurbation.
- 16.3.4 Revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) were published in December 2024. The NPPF 2024 reaffirms the Government's strong commitment to Green Belt land. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence.
- 16.3.5 The NPPF (Para. 143) outlines that the Green Belt serves five purposes:
- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;**
  - b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;**
  - c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
  - d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and**
  - e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 16.3.6 One of the changes introduced in the 2024 version of the NPPF is the new concept of 'grey belt' land, which aims to identify and utilise specific areas within the Green Belt that are

suitable for development, while ensuring that the broader aims of Green Belt protection are not compromised.

- 16.3.7 The updated NPPF defines the 'grey belt' as: *"For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, 'grey belt' is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. 'Grey belt' excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development."*
- 16.3.8 It should be noted that Green Belt purposes (c) and (e) (encroachment into the countryside and assisting in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land) do not feature in the above definition.
- 16.3.9 Paragraph 153 of the NPPF states that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities must give substantial weight to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. However, it should be noted that a new footnote 55 confirms that harm to the Green Belt includes harm to its openness but clarifies that this does not apply in the context of previously developed land or grey belt land where development is not inappropriate.
- 16.3.10 Inappropriate development is essentially harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. These "very special circumstances" will only exist if the potential harm to the Green Belt, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
- 16.3.11 Paragraph 154 of the NPPF 2024 states that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless exceptions listed in this paragraph apply.
- 16.3.12 Furthermore, for those sites identified as grey belt, proposals still need to satisfy all the criteria listed in new paragraph 155 (a-d) of the NPPF, which will be fully assessed later in this report.
- 16.3.13 If development cannot meet the criteria in NPPF paragraph 155 and is considered inappropriate, then the usual Green Belt restriction applies, i.e., development should only be approved if "very special circumstances" exist, as set out in paragraph 153, which states that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt. Moreover, it is explained that no very special circumstances can exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt due to inappropriateness and any other harm resulting from the proposal is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
- 16.3.14 The applicant is seeking full planning permission to erect a food store with a gross internal area of 1,780 sqm, along with associated access, parking, and landscaping. The footprint of the proposed store overlaps the 'Main Urban Area' and Green Belt boundaries. Approximately half of the proposed store, and the majority of the proposed car parking, will be located in the Green Belt and outside the 'Main Urban Area' as defined in the adopted Local Plan.
- 16.3.15 Firstly, it is important to establish whether the southern section of the proposed site can be potentially identified as grey belt land. The Green Belt section of the Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) has been updated to explain how to assess Green Belt land to identify grey belt land and how to deal with proposals on grey belt land.

- 16.3.16 The evidence underpinning the emerging Dorset Council Local Plan, specifically the Strategic Green Belt Review (December 2020), is now considered out of date. Dorset Council is currently in the process of commissioning a joint Green Belt Review with Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, in response to recent changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) relating to Green Belts. This joint review will inform the preparation of both authorities' Local Plans and support the identification of potential 'grey belt' land.
- 16.3.17 The NPPF and the updated Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) also state that if a local authority has not completed a Green Belt review, it is advisable, and in many cases necessary for an applicant to provide a Grey Belt assessment as part of their proposal. A Grey Belt assessment has not been provided in support of the application.
- 16.3.18 In the absence of an up-to-date Green Belt review by the Local Planning Authority and without an applicant-led Grey Belt assessment, the 2020 Strategic Green Belt Review nonetheless serves as a useful reference point in assessing the potential harm to the Green Belt arising from the proposed inappropriate development. It also assists in evaluating whether the proposed parcel of Green Belt land could potentially be reclassified as 'Grey Belt' land, although it cannot be formally designated as such in the absence of an up-to-date Green Belt review. The 2020 review was conducted in two stages:
- **Stage 1:** Identifies variations in the extent to which land within the BCP and Dorset Council areas contributes to the NPPF's Green Belt purposes.
  - **Stage 2:** Assesses the potential harm to the Green Belt that would be caused if land identified by the Councils for potential development were to be released from the Green Belt.
- 16.3.19 The evidence was gathered to support the plan-making process and therefore specifically relates to paragraphs 145 to 152 of the NPPF (as amended). The areas assessed in the local plan evidence do not exactly correspond with the boundaries of the application site. The assessment of parcel CO18 in the local plan evidence for example is larger than the application site boundary and does not include the northern part of the site, which lies outside the Green Belt boundaries. The 2020 review of the evidence is also considered relevant when considering harm to the Green Belt and assessing whether there are 'very special circumstances' for the purposes of paragraph 153.
- 16.3.20 When assessing harm, both 'Appendix B (Detailed Stage 2 Harm Assessments: Colehill)' of the Strategic Green Belt Assessment Stage 2 Harm Assessment (December 2020) and the assessment of harm for the application site (identified as parcel CO18 in the Green Belt assessment) need to be considered.
- 16.3.21 The 2020 Strategic Green Belt assessment sought to analyse the contribution of certain parts of the Green Belt and the contribution they make to Green Belt purposes, including:
- the relevance of each Green Belt purpose, given the parcel's location relative to large built-up areas, towns, countryside and historic towns;
  - the extent to which the land can be considered open in Green Belt terms;
  - for Purpose 1-3, the degree of distinction between the parcel and urban area(s) - that is, the extent to which land is associated with the urban area or with the wider countryside.

- 16.3.22 The 2020 Green Belt harm assessment separates parcels of land into 4 different categories based on the distinction between that parcel and the built-up area:

**Purpose 1:** A weak, or no, contribution to checking the unrestricted sprawl of the large built-up area. The assessment finds that *"Land is not close enough to the large built-up area to be associated with it. Therefore, development would not be perceived as sprawl of the large built-up area."*

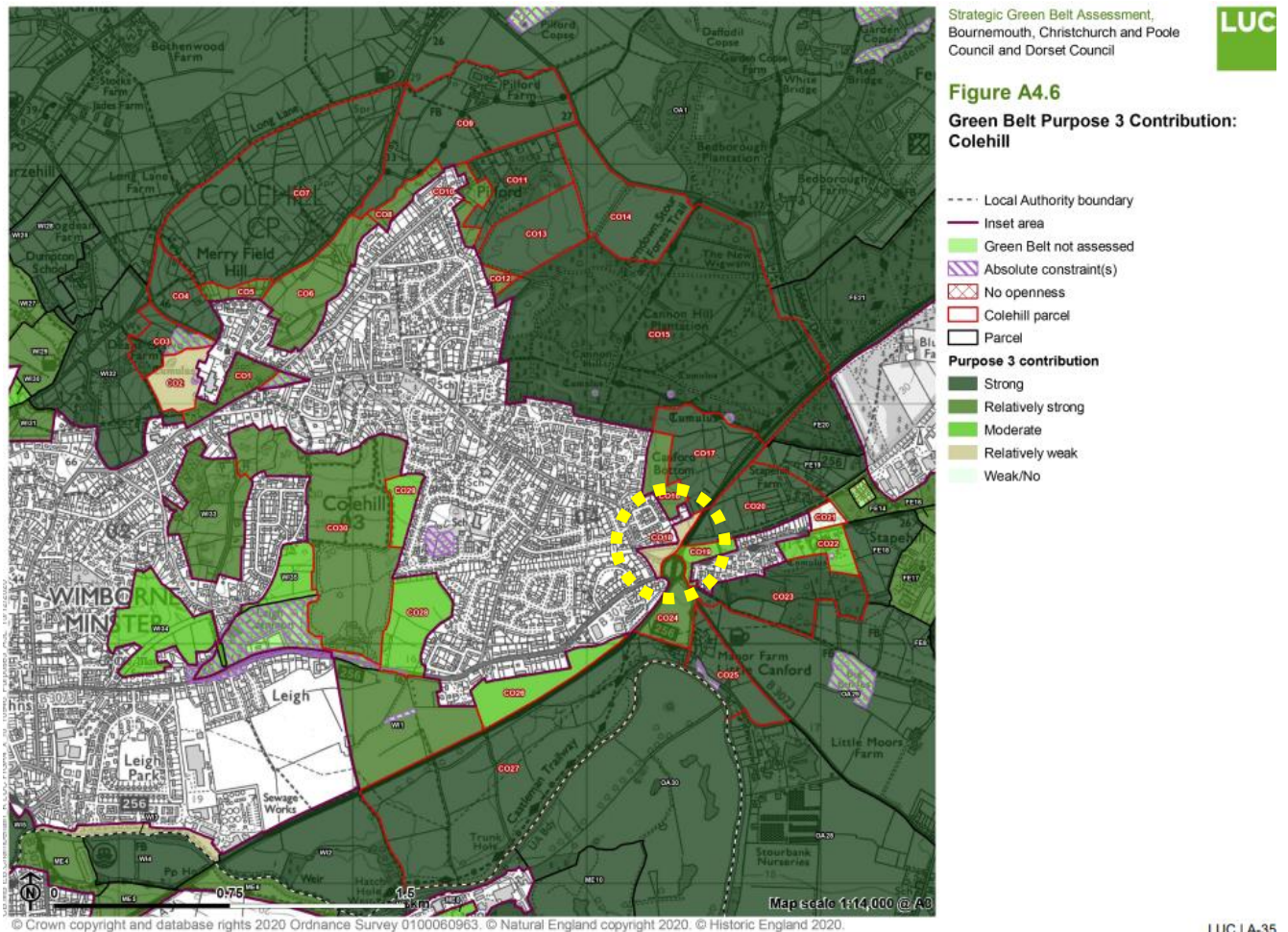
**Purpose 2:** A weak, or no, contribution to preventing neighbouring towns from merging. The assessment finds that *"The parcel is open and peripheral to a narrow gap between Colehill and Ferndown to the east. There is weak distinction between the parcel and the inset area, which reduces the extent to which development would be perceived as narrowing the gap. Overall, the area makes a relatively weak contribution to preventing the merging of neighbouring towns."*

**Purpose 3:** A relatively weak contribution to assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The assessment finds that *"The parcel is open and characterised by commercial use buildings to the west, which are associated with the urban area and diminish the extent to which it is perceived as countryside. There is weak distinction between the parcel and the inset area, which reduces the extent to which development would be perceived as encroachment on the countryside. Overall, the area makes a relatively weak contribution to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment."*

**Purpose 4:** A weak, or no, contribution to preserving the setting and special character of Colehill (as a historic town). The assessment finds that *"The parcel does not contribute to the setting or special character of any historic towns."*

**Purpose 5:** An equal contribution to assisting with urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- 16.3.23 After also considering the impact that Green Belt release might have on the function of adjacent Green Belt, the assessment finds that the overall harm of releasing parcel CO18 would be 'low'.



*Appendix B Detailed Stage 2 Harm Assessments: Colehill' of the Strategic Green Belt Assessment Stage 2 Harm Assessment (December 2020) (Republished January 2021) and the assessment of harm for the application (identified as parcel CO18 in the green belt assessment)*

- 16.3.24 Based on the review of available evidence, it is considered that site CO18, located on the edge of Colehill, although currently open and undeveloped, has a weak physical and visual distinction from the adjoining urban area. The site makes a relatively limited contribution to the purposes of including land within the Green Belt and has negligible impact on the openness or character of adjacent areas. Subject to meeting relevant sustainability criteria and ensuring that the development does not result in significant harm to the wider Green Belt, development on site CO18 could potentially be justified under emerging Grey Belt policy principles.
- 16.3.25 The updated PPG states that "where grey belt is identified, it does not automatically follow that it should be allocated for development, released from the Green Belt or for development proposals to be approved in all circumstances. The contribution Green Belt land makes to Green Belt purposes is one consideration in making decisions about Green Belt land. Such decisions should also be informed by an overall application of the relevant policies in the NPPF."
- 16.3.26 When it comes to determining in what circumstances proposals on grey belt land should be approved the PPG states 'Where a site is judged to be grey belt, and to not fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt across the plan area if released or developed, wider considerations will still be relevant to the consideration of development proposals on the site. These would include determining whether the development would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, as set out in

*paragraph 155 of the NPPF. That question would include consideration of whether a development is sustainably located, whether it would meet the 'Golden Rules' contributions (where applicable), and whether there is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed.'*

16.3.27 NPPF Paragraph 155 amongst other criteria specifies that the development of homes, commercial, and other developments in the Green Belt will not be inappropriate where:

*b) There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed.*

16.3.28 In this case, the proposed food store is located partly within the urban area and on land which could potentially be identified as grey belt land. The site is considered to be in a sustainable location, while the 'Golden Rules' requirements do not apply to the type of proposed development. However, the criterion under paragraph 155(b), which requires demonstrating an unmet need for the proposed use of development, is not met. This is fully assessed later in this report.

16.3.29 The proposal would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt because it does not accord with the exceptions set out in paragraph 155(b) of the NPPF. Furthermore, in addition to the proposed supermarket building and access, the proposed car parking area extends into the southern part of the application site and the Green Belt. The proposed hardstanding needed to form the car parking area, and the use of this area, are likely to be harmful to the openness of the Green Belt and encroach into what is currently undeveloped land. Consequently, the proposed food store with associated access, car parking, and landscaping would cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

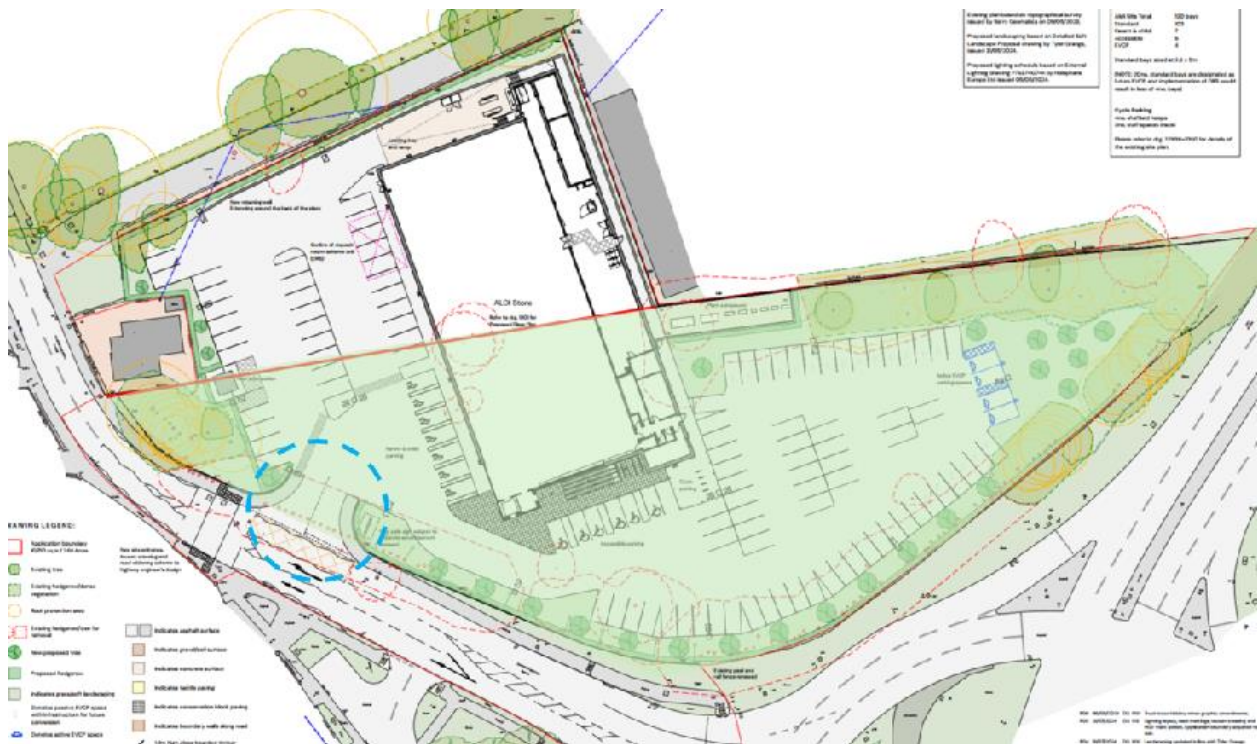
16.3.30 The NPPF and Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) make clear that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 153 of the NPPF states that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt. Likewise, it is explained that no very special circumstances can exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt due to inappropriateness and any other harm resulting from the proposal is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

16.3.31 Given that the proposal does not meet any of the exceptions set out in paragraph 154 of the NPPF and criteria for grey belt have not been met, it is therefore necessary to consider whether there are 'very special circumstances' which clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt (arising from the inappropriate development) and any other harm resulting from the proposal.

16.3.32 Harm to the openness of the Green Belt may be considered in both spatial and visual terms. Factors such as the visual impact of the proposal, its volume and the degree of activity likely to be generated, such as traffic generation are all relevant considerations.

16.3.33 The development would result in both visual and spatial harm to the openness of the Green Belt. In order to assess whether a development would cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt necessitates a baseline to be established. At present the 1.5 acres of the site is undeveloped. The proposal identifies development in the form of a 1,780 square metre Class E(a) retail food store (measured internally) with 120 associated parking spaces, landscaping, and highway access.

16.3.34 As illustrated below, approximately half of the proposed store building—along with the majority of the parking area, trolley bay, cycle parking, plant compound, new highway access, and a substation—will be situated within currently undeveloped Green Belt land (indicated in green below).



16.3.35 This southern portion of the site is not classified as previously developed land within the Green Belt and remains undeveloped, forming the baseline for this assessment. Currently, the site comprises open grassland situated between Canford Bottom (A classified road) and residential development to the west. To the south and east, it is bounded by the Canford Bottom Roundabout and the A31, a key route within the national strategic highway network. As previously noted, the northern section of the site is in employment use, with additional employment land located immediately to the east. Beyond the northern boundary lies the residential development at Fryer's Copse.

16.3.36 The site is enclosed by mature hedgerows, trees, and scrub, which significantly limit its visibility from the Canford Bottom Roundabout when approached from either direction. Some limited views may be possible when approaching from Colehill along Canford Bottom Road. The site serves as a green buffer between the settlement of Colehill and the adjacent highways, contributing to a sense of separation. Its open field with mature boundary planting character enhances the visual amenity of this part of the Canford Bottom Roundabout and contributes towards the openness of the Green Belt in terms of its role and function.

16.3.37 The proposed development of a retail store would result in a clear and tangible visual impact. The introduction of built form, associated car parking, and ancillary infrastructure (such as trolley bays, lighting columns, advertisement displays, and electric vehicle charging points) alongside the operational activity during trading hours, would represent a significant departure from the site's current undeveloped and rural character. This transformation would result in the urbanisation of a site that presently contributes to the

openness of the surrounding landscape. The visual impact would be permanent and noticeable, particularly due to the creation of a new two-way vehicular access and the removal of mature trees, which, although proposed to be replaced with new landscaping, would not immediately mitigate the loss of established screening.

- 16.3.38 The development would therefore conflict with the third purpose of the Green Belt, as set out in paragraph 143 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which seeks to safeguard the countryside from encroachment. While the contribution the site makes to purpose 3 is considered weak, the impact should still be afforded substantial weight in the planning balance, regardless of its performance in relation to the purpose of the Green Belt.
- 16.3.39 In terms of spatial impact, the southern section of the site is currently undeveloped. The proposal would result in the development of the majority of this area to accommodate the supermarket building, car park, and associated infrastructure, including an upgraded access, substation, and close-boarded fencing along the site boundaries. The scale of the proposed footprint is considerable and would have a harmful, urbanising effect on the natural environment. The openness of the Green Belt is defined by the absence of built form and its permanence in remaining open. The introduction of a supermarket on this site would result in a permanent loss of openness, contrary to the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy.
- 16.3.40 To minimise both landscape and visual impacts, a landscaping scheme has been submitted incorporating limited tree retention, new tree planting, native hedgerows, ornamental and ground cover planting, and a wildflower seed mix. While these measures would contribute to softening the visual presence of the development within the street scene to some extent, they would not sufficiently mitigate the overall visual and spatial impacts arising from the scale of the development and associated infrastructure, such as lighting, parking areas, and other ancillary works. The substantial footprint of the proposal, combined with the removal of mature trees and shrubs along the site boundaries, would significantly alter the character of this currently undeveloped land. As such, the proposal would result in a harmful impact on the openness of the Green Belt, contrary to its fundamental purpose.
- 16.3.41 For these reasons it is considered that the proposed development would result in harm to the Green Belt, both on a visual and spatial level, by virtue of the development of a previously undeveloped site and the scale of development (including associated paraphernalia). In addition, it constitutes inappropriate development as defined by the NPPF. The application should therefore only be approved if the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development.
- 16.3.42 **The issue of harm to openness of the Green Belt is attributed substantial weight against the development as required by national policy.**

#### Very Special Circumstances

- 16.3.43 The applicant has submitted a case for 'very special circumstances' (VSCs) making the case that harm to the Green Belt is clearly outweighed by other circumstances as follows:
1. *There is an economic need for deep discount groceries, given the cost of living crisis.*

2. *The proposed store will not result in an adverse impact on any existing, committed or planned retail investment within any surrounding centres.*
3. *The proposed store will reduce the necessity to travel further afield for discount groceries for local residents.*
4. *No alternative sites available.*
5. *The proposed site location would reduce traffic to wider supermarkets and thus be beneficial transport movement wise. It is also sustainably located so as to be accessed with ease via non-car transport methods.*
6. *Job creation and economic benefits.*

16.3.44 The proposed is for new retail development on open Green Belt land. As set out above, this together with associated operational development (access, parking, roads, retail paraphernalia) will by its very nature create a loss of openness, resulting in inappropriate development and harm to the Green Belt. As the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, planning permission should only be granted in very special circumstances where the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm is clearly outweighed by very special circumstances. Therefore, very special circumstances can only be considered once all impacts of the proposal have been assessed.

16.3.45 Whether or not harm to the Green Belt identified in this report is clearly outweighed by VSCs is assessed at the end of this report.

#### **16.4 Location and Sustainability**

16.4.1 The northern section of the site is located within the settlement boundary of Wimborne and Colehill, while the southern section lies outside the settlement boundary. However, the southern section is adjacent to the settlement of Wimborne and Colehill to the north and is surrounded by it to the southwest. Additionally, the Stapehill settlement boundary is approximately 130 metres to the southeast.

16.4.2 The southern section of the site is technically not supported by the settlement hierarchy but when considering the entire site edged in red on the location plan, it is evident that this location benefits from both deliverable pedestrian and existing vehicular access.

16.4.3 Policy KS2 of the CS identifies Colehill as a Suburban Centre *with no existing centres that will provide for some residential development along with community, leisure and retail facilities to meet day to day needs within the existing urban areas.* However, the site is located along a Prime Transport Corridor (B3073), as identified by Policy KS9 of the Core Strategy, where development is encouraged.

16.4.4 The B3073 connects Wimborne Town Centre with Ferndown, Longham, Parley Cross, Hurn Roundabout, and the Blackwater Interchange (A338 junction). Additionally, the site is located directly adjacent to the Canford Bottom Roundabout, which is part of the Strategic Road Network (SRN) A31, connecting the site with West Moors, Ferndown, Ashley Heath, and Ringwood.

16.4.5 Bus stops with a regular service are located within 400 metres of the proposed site. These stops are equipped with shelters, seating, and lighting. The bus service offers a suitable choice of transport between Bournemouth Centre and Wimborne, with additional local links to West Parley, Ferndown, Stapehill, and Leigh Road.

16.4.6 Given the location of the site, existing transport links and road network, on balance it is considered that the location would not warrant a reason for refusal of the scheme on the basis that the location is unsustainable.

16.4.7 **With the above in mind the issue of the location outside of the settlement boundary is therefore attributed limited weight against the development.**

## **16.5 Loss of employment land**

16.5.1 The northern section of the site remains in active employment use. CS Policy KS5: Employment Land, identifies the need for the development of an additional 80 hectares of employment land to meet future demand. Consequently, any proposed change of use from employment to retail must be robustly justified.

16.5.2 CS Policy PC2: Alternative Uses for Employment Land clearly states that, where there is compelling evidence of a lack of market demand over the plan period, employment land may be considered for alternative uses outside the B Use Classes. Paragraph 16.12 further clarifies that the loss of employment land will only be considered where strong evidence demonstrates that the site is not required by the market to meet projected land requirements during the plan period.

16.5.3 In March 2024, 'Iceni' completed an 'Employment Land Study' (Dorset Council and Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council), which identified a significant demand for employment growth. In support of the application, the applicant has submitted an Employment Land Report (May 2024), prepared by Alder King (AK). The AK report assesses the implications of redeveloping the Canford Bottom site, evaluating whether the loss of employment land would adversely impact local supply, the suitability of the existing premises for continued employment use, and the potential economic benefits of the proposed scheme.

16.5.4 The Alder King Study examines both the loss and potential growth of employment space across the East Dorset area based on an outdated document data from 2020/21 (the East Dorset Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) 2020/21). More recent and relevant employment data is contained in the Dorset Council Authority Monitoring Report (April 2023 – March 2024) (AMR 23/24), published in April 2024, prior to the submission of this application. The Dorset and BCP Employment Land Study (DC/BCP 2024), published in March 2024, is also material.

16.5.5 In order to effectively consider the findings of the Alder King Study, it is essential to understand the geographical scope of the various monitoring reports referenced.

16.5.6 The AMR 2020/21 (1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021) which forms the basis of the Alder King Study, excludes Christchurch, focussing solely on the former East Dorset District. The 2023/24 AMR (1 April 2023-31 March 2024) by contrast encompasses the entire Dorset Council area and the Dorset and BCP Employment Land Study 2024 (DC/BCP 2024) covers both Dorset Council and BCP.

16.5.7 The Alder King Study presents the following justifications based on the submitted information:

### 1. Impact on Employment Land Supply

- 16.5.8 While the site in question is not formally designated as allocated employment land, its potential loss should be assessed in the context of the broader local employment land supply. According to Table 6.2 of the AMR 20/21, East Dorset retained 49.3 hectares of allocated employment land. This figure represents a level well above 50% of the target set for the East Dorset and Christchurch (EDC) Local Plan area, suggesting that, at the time of monitoring, sufficient land was available to accommodate future employment needs within East Dorset.
- 16.5.9 It is important to note that the above calculations are derived from the total employment land supply, which encompasses sites with planning permission, allocated sites, and land under construction.
- 16.5.10 Although the AMR 2020/21 excludes Christchurch, the analysis undertaken by Alder King, incorporates land at Bournemouth Airport (within the BCP Council area). The Alder King analysis claims a total of 89.9 hectares of employment land remains available across 'East Dorset'. This includes:
- Bournemouth Airport – 52.5 ha
  - Blunt's Farm – 29.8 ha
  - Woolsbridge – 4.5 ha
  - Bailie Gate – 3.1 ha
- 16.5.11 In addition to the data within the AMR 20/21, Alder King has undertaken a snapshot assessment of available office and industrial floorspace across the East Dorset area in April 2024. The results of their research are presented in below tables.

#### Built Floorspace Available to Let

| Type         | Available Floorspace (m <sup>2</sup> ) |
|--------------|----------------------------------------|
| Industrial   | 27,917                                 |
| Office       | 2,251                                  |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>30,168</b>                          |

It is noted below, a significant portion of the industrial floorspace is located within newly constructed units at Ferndown Industrial Estate:

| Location                                  | Floorspace (m <sup>2</sup> ) |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Units 1–3 & 6–11A, Bedrock Logistics Park | 3,548                        |
| Units 14–17, Bedrock Logistics Park       | 7,623                        |
| Units 18–26, Bedrock Logistics Park       | 3,819                        |

#### Consented Development Schemes

| Site                                       | Floorspace (m <sup>2</sup> ) |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Plot C, Ferndown Industrial Estate         | 9,290                        |
| 50 Cobham Road, Ferndown Industrial Estate | 4,979                        |
| ABP140, Aviation Business Park             | 13,006                       |
| ABP39, Aviation Business Park              | 3,627                        |
| <b>Total</b>                               | <b>30,866</b>                |

- 16.5.12 The AK study advises that these built and consented schemes provide a total of 61,072 m<sup>2</sup> of employment floorspace in the East Dorset and BCP Council areas.
- 16.5.13 Alder King argues, the subject site, comprising 918 m<sup>2</sup>, represents only approx. 1.5% of that total indicating that its loss would have a negligible impact on the overall supply of employment floorspace.
- 16.5.14 In summary the AK report concludes that East Dorset benefits from a substantial supply of both employment land and built commercial floorspace, with sufficient capacity to meet projected demand well beyond the current Local Plan period. They argue that consequently the loss of the subject site would not have a detrimental impact on overall employment land provision.

## 2. Suitability of Existing Premises

- 16.5.15 The site currently accommodates two B2-class industrial buildings totalling 918 m<sup>2</sup>. The applicants claim that premises are considered outdated, offering poor amenities and limited vehicular access and as such are deemed economically obsolete and unsuitable for continued industrial use. They also argue that as the surrounding area, is predominantly residential in character, this further reduces the site's suitability for ongoing industrial operations.

## 3. Economic Benefits of the Proposed Scheme

- 16.5.16 The applicant has initially indicated that the proposed food store would create 40–50 part-time jobs, which was queried by the case officer. The applicant has since clarified (email dated 1 August 2025) that the development is expected to generate the equivalent of 30–35 full-time jobs. The proposed development would therefore result in a modest net increase in employment opportunities, delivering an economic benefit to the local area.
- 16.5.17 The submitted AK study concludes that the loss of B-class employment uses on this site would not adversely affect the provision of employment land within the settlement of Wimborne/Colehill or the wider East Dorset area. Alder King indicates that there is sufficient availability of both strategic and local employment land to meet projected demand in East Dorset up to 2028, thereby justifying the release of this site from employment use.

## Officer assessment on loss of employment land

- 16.5.18 As previously noted, the most up-to-date evidence base includes the Dorset Council Authority Monitoring Report AMR 23/24 and the Dorset and BCP Employment Land Study (DC/BCP 2024). These documents have been used by officers to assess whether there is sufficient allocated employment land available across the Dorset Council area over the plan period.
- 16.5.19 The AMR 23/24 outlines the Council's progress in implementing planning policy and guiding development across a range of sectors, including housing, employment, retail, the environment, heritage, and infrastructure. It covers the entire Dorset Council area.
- 16.5.20 The monitoring approach adopted in AMR 23/24 records only completed developments. Changes within employment use classes are tracked solely where they result in a net gain

or loss of employment floorspace, rather than capturing all internal or minor changes of use.

### Employment Land and Floorspace Completions (2023/24)

#### Net Gains – Dorset wide

- Land Area: 8.36 hectares
- Floorspace: 19,367 m<sup>2</sup>

| Area                             | Land Gain (ha) | Floorspace Gain (m <sup>2</sup> ) |
|----------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland | 2.17           | 7,814                             |
| North Dorset                     | 2.97           | 4,868                             |
| East Dorset                      | 1.41           | 1,810                             |
| Purbeck                          | 1.81           | 4,875                             |

*Source: Dorset Council Authority Monitoring Report April 2023 – March 2024 (AMR 23/24)*

#### Net Losses – Dorset wide

- Land Area: 3.51 hectares
- Floorspace: 4,349 m<sup>2</sup>

| Area                             | Land Loss (ha) | Floorspace Loss (m <sup>2</sup> ) |
|----------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland | 1.61           | 2,582                             |
| North Dorset                     | 0.73           | 430                               |
| East Dorset                      | 0              | 0                                 |
| Purbeck                          | 1.16           | 1,337                             |

*Source: Dorset Council Authority Monitoring Report April 2023 – March 2024 (AMR 23/24)*

16.5.21 A joint Employment Land Study, published in March 2024 by Dorset Council and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, assessed employment land needs across the region for the period 2021 to 2039. This study, undertaken by 'Iceni Projects', provides a detailed analysis of employment land availability across Dorset. Based on the findings of the March 2024 study, the distribution of available employment land by sub-area within Dorset is as follows:

| Sub-Area             | Key Sites / Settlements                            | Estimated Supply (ha) |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| South Eastern Dorset | Blandford Forum,<br>Ferndown, Wimborne,<br>Verwood | 66.4                  |
| Central Dorset       | Dorchester, Crossways,<br>Puddletown               | 30.5                  |
| Northern Dorset      | Gillingham, Shaftesbury,<br>Sturminster Newton     | 21.2                  |
| Western Dorset       | Bridport, Beaminster, Lyme<br>Regis                | 13.4                  |
| Southern Dorset      | Weymouth, Portland                                 | 38.7                  |

|                |  |          |
|----------------|--|----------|
|                |  |          |
| Total (Dorset) |  | 170.2 ha |

Source: Dorset and BCP Employment Land Study (March 2024)

- 16.5.23 The assessment categorises employment land by Use Class, including Offices (Class E(g)(i)/(ii)), Industrial (Class E(g)(iii)/B2), and Warehousing/Logistics (Class B8), and groups sites into the following categories:
- Key Employment Sites – strategically significant locations, often larger in scale and typically safeguarded for employment use;
  - Proposed Allocations – new or emerging sites identified within the draft Dorset Local Plan;
  - Completions and Extant Permissions – sites that have either been developed or have extant planning permission.
- 16.5.24 Based on the findings, East Dorset recorded a decline in new employment land completions in 2023–2024, with only 1.41 hectares delivered compared to 4.23 hectares in the previous year. However, it is notable that no employment land was lost during this period, indicating improved retention of employment sites. Despite the recent decline in completions, the joint Employment Land Study (2024) estimates that East Dorset has approximately 66.4 hectares of available employment land representing the highest level of supply among all sub-regions within the wider Dorset Council area.
- 16.5.25 Although the report does not provide a standalone employment land requirement for East Dorset, the data suggests that East Dorset has made a significant contribution to the overall employment land supply in the Dorset Council area. The net gains in both land and floorspace indicate a positive trend in employment land delivery.
- 16.5.26 The loss of the existing employment land is considered acceptable due to the site's modest size (approximately 0.27 hectares) and the findings of the most recent Authority Monitoring Report and Employment Land Study, which confirm a sufficient supply of available employment land within the East Dorset area.
- 16.5.27 The economic benefits associated with the proposed Aldi store are deemed to outweigh the loss of this employment site. However, Policy CS PC2 clearly stipulates that employment land may only be reallocated for non-B class uses where robust evidence demonstrates a lack of market demand over the plan period.
- 16.5.28 The applicant has sought formal pre-application advice. In relation to the proposed loss of employment land, officers advised that, in order to justify this loss, the applicant should provide the following evidence:
- *‘Evidence that the loss of the site would not have a detrimental impact to the strategic and local supply of employment land (qualitatively and quantitatively). In doing this they might want to assess what other suitable, viable alternative sites are available.*
  - *Set out any reasons why the employment premises are not thought suitable for continued/future use (if there are any), describing any problems caused by the existing uses and providing evidence of measures considered to mitigate the issues and why they could not be overcome.*
  - *Full and proper marketing evidence for a continual period of time to be agreed with the office (typically 12 months or more):*

- **Marketing tools:** *What types of tools did the Estate Agents use to market the property? For instance, was it just using advertising boards outside the premises, was it online marketing or was it periodic mailshots to retailers and other permitted uses?*
- **Length of time it was marketed:** *Provide evidence to show the length of time this premises was advertised for? For instance, was it marketed once or was it continually marketed for a period of time?*
- **Rental Price/ sales value:** *Show how much this premises was advertised for rent/ for sale and to demonstrate that this is a reasonable asking price by submitting at least 3 comparable.*
- **Issues with letting/ selling unit for its permitted use:** *When prospective owners/ tenants showed interest in the premises, why did they not pursue it any further? Please note it is only necessary to list the interested parties and summarise their reasons for not pursuing this premises any further'.*

*In addition, it would be helpful if the applicant were to set out any local needs to be addressed by the proposal, or economic/community benefits resulting from the scheme to aid the officer in looking at the relative merits of the retention vs the loss of the use.*

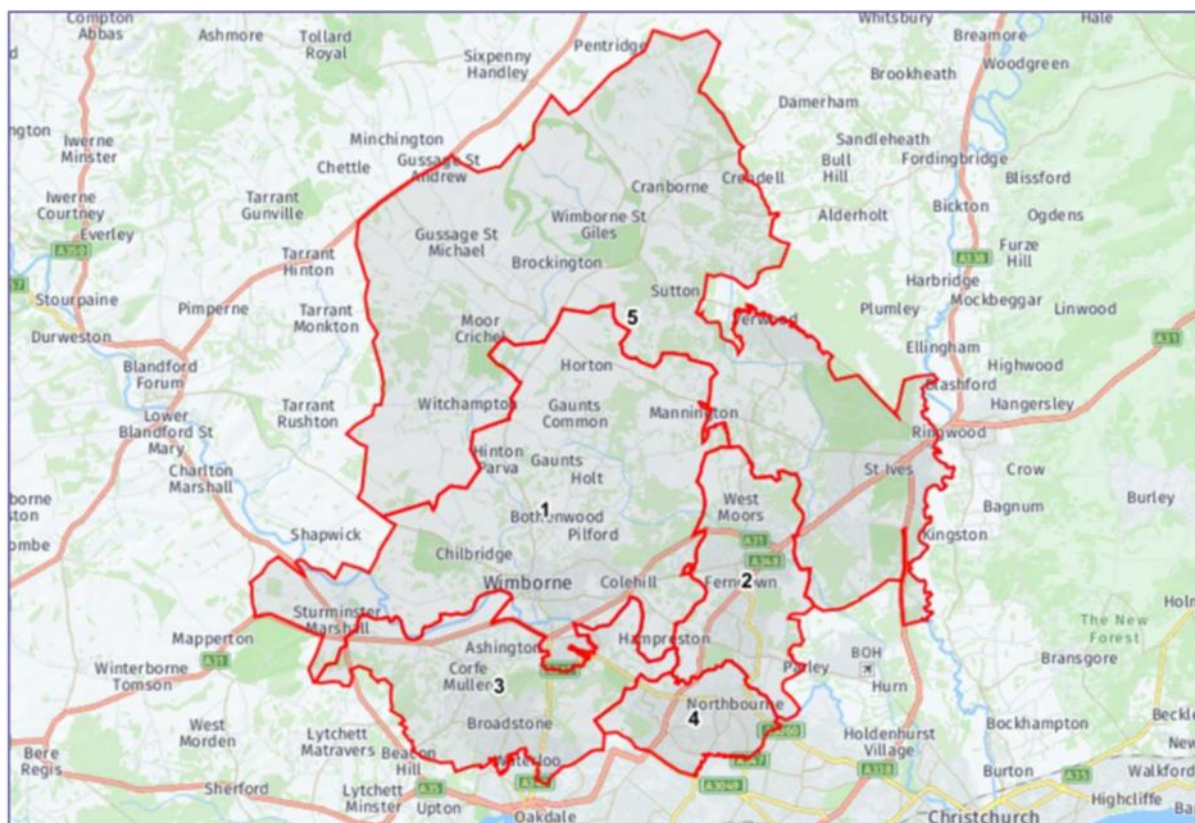
- 16.5.29 Although the applicant has submitted an Employment Land Report prepared by Alder King in support of the proposed loss of B-class uses on the site, the report clearly states that no physical survey of the buildings was undertaken. This is despite the document asserting that the buildings are nearing the end of their useful life. Furthermore, the report acknowledges that no marketing of the site for employment purposes has been carried out, yet it concludes that the site is unsuitable for continued employment use.
- 16.5.30 It remains possible, that the site may be suitable and financially viable for other businesses operating within the scope of its permitted use. In the absence of the evidence, officers are unable to make a fully informed judgement based on the limited information currently submitted.
- 16.5.31 As no evidence has been submitted to satisfy the requirements of Policy PC2 and the accompanying text within paragraph 16.12 of the Core Strategy (2014), this constitutes a reason for refusal. An informative note is recommended should the applicants progress to appeal or resubmit.
- 16.5.32 **With the above in mind the matter of fully addressing a loss of existing employment land is attributed limited weight against the development, subject to appropriate justification, as required by local planning policy (PC2).**

## **16.6 Need for retail provision**

- 16.6.1 The proposal would provide 1,780 sqm of floor space, of which 1,315 sqm will be allocated for sales. The format takes a similar approach to other discount retailers, providing mostly convenience goods with approx. comparison goods 'Special Buys' offering seasonal and limited-time items.
- 16.6.2 CS Policy KS6 (Town Centre Hierarchy) defines the hierarchy of retail centres, ensuring that most new retail development is directed to the main town centres, which are the most accessible and have the most development opportunities on previously developed land,

such as Wimborne, Ferndown and Verwood. CS Policy KS7 focuses on the role of Town and District Centres, aiming to strongly support the vitality and viability of these centres.

- 16.6.3 In order for key retail centres within the plan area to maintain and enhance their vitality and viability, CS Policy KS8 (Future Retail Provision) highlights that additional retail floorspace is needed to accommodate the growing population and increasing retail expenditure. Wimborne and Ferndown are identified as the main focus for additional comparison retail floorspace, with smaller contributions from Verwood and West Moors.
- 16.6.4 Although demonstrating retail need is no longer a policy requirement for planning applications in England, the proposed development at Canford Bottom partially lies within the designated Green Belt. As such, Dorset Council has requested an assessment of retail need to determine whether any such need could justify development in this sensitive location.
- 16.6.5 The applicant has submitted Planning and Retail Statement (PRS) prepared by Avison Young (AY) on behalf of the applicant which includes both a sequential sites assessment and an impact assessment. Retail consultant Lambert Smith Hampton (LSH), was appointed by the Council to review submitted information in relation to retail need and retail impact.
- 16.6.6 In assessing the retail need for the proposed Aldi food store at Canford Bottom, it is essential to define the catchment area that the store is expected to serve. This area is geographically constrained by Bournemouth and Poole to the south, Ringwood to the north-east, Blandford Forum to the north-west, and Verwood to the north. As such, the catchment is more limited than the broader study area used in the applicant's Planning and Retail Statement (PRS), and more closely aligned with Zones 1 and 2 of their household survey as illustrated in below map.



Source: Household Survey Study Area (PRS, Figure 2, page 50)

- 16.6.7 The applicant's Planning and Retail Statement (PRS) does not explicitly address retail need. However, it does indicate that convenience expenditure within the study area is forecast to decline by £1.4 million between 2024 and 2028, including a £0.6 million reduction within the core catchment zones (Zones 1 and 2). This suggests a declining requirement for additional convenience retail provision.
- 16.6.8 While the PRS notes that some existing stores, namely Tesco in Ferndown and Waitrose in Wimborne, are trading above benchmark levels, which could imply a degree of unmet demand, this is not supported by the most recent evidence. The Dorset Retail and Leisure Study Update (DRLSU, 2022), prepared by Lambert Smith Hampton, concludes that there is a significant oversupply of convenience floorspace across the Dorset Council area. Under the baseline scenario (based on current performance), no additional capacity is identified up to 2040. Even when housing growth is factored in, only a modest requirement of 289 sqm net is identified in 2025, with no further need thereafter.
- 16.6.9 A more detailed capacity assessment focused on the Ferndown and Wimborne areas confirms this conclusion. The available convenience expenditure in Zones 1 and 2 in 2028 is estimated at £145.2 million. However, the benchmark turnover of existing stores in the area exceeds £158 million, indicating that current provision already surpasses demand. Specifically, the five main food stores in the area (Tesco, Lidl, and Sainsbury's in Ferndown; Waitrose in Wimborne; and Lidl in West Parley) are forecast to generate over £108 million in convenience sales, exceeding the available main food expenditure of £101.64 million.
- 16.6.10 There is no clear qualitative need for additional provision. While some expenditure leakage is observed, 18.8% from Zone 1 and 9.2% from Zone 2, this is not primarily directed towards Aldi stores. Instead, a significant proportion of Zone 1 residents prefer the Asda

store at West Quay Road, Poole, over the closer Aldi, suggesting that the proposed Aldi would not address a specific qualitative gap in the market.

- 16.6.11 In conclusion, there is no demonstrable quantitative or qualitative need for additional retail floorspace in the Ferndown and Wimborne area. The existing provision is sufficient to meet current and forecast demand, and the proposed Aldi store does not address a clear deficiency in the local retail offer.
- 16.6.12 The applicant has failed to demonstrate the existence of an unmet retail need within the plan area that would justify the proposed development. This position has been independently reviewed and confirmed by the Council's retail consultant's LSH.
- 16.6.13 As noted under the principle of development, the proposal is contrary to the development plan and the settlement hierarchy set out in Policy KS2 and town centre hierarchy in CS Policy KS6. The proposed development at Canford Bottom is partially located within the designated Green Belt. While demonstrating retail need is no longer a policy requirement under national planning policy, it remains a material consideration in this context.
- 16.6.14 There is no evidence of either a quantitative or qualitative need for additional retail provision in the Ferndown and Wimborne areas. The existing network of stores is sufficient to meet current and projected demand, and the proposed Aldi store would not address any identified gap in provision. As such, retail need does not provide justification for development within the Green Belt and does not meet the criteria for potential grey belt land to be developed.
- 16.6.15 **With the above in mind the matter of addressing retail need is attributed substantial weight against the proposed development.**

## **16.7 Impact on local centres**

### Sequential Test

- 16.7.1 Policy KS7 of the CS notes that the defined town and district centres are to be the focus for town centre uses, including employment, retail, leisure and entertainment, arts, culture, religion, health, tourism, places of assembly, community facilities and higher density housing. The policy requires a sequential assessment for planning applications for main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre, to ensure that all in-centre options have been thoroughly assessed before less central sites are considered.
- 16.7.2 The application site is sited outside of defined town centres. The proposed use is defined in the glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as a main town centre use. Paragraph 91 of the NPPF states that Local Planning Authorities 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.
- 16.7.3 Paragraph 92 states that *'when considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites which are well connected to the town centre. Applicants and local planning authorities should demonstrate flexibility on issues such as format and scale, so that opportunities to utilise suitable town centre or edge of centre sites are fully explored.'*

- 16.7.4 As the application site is sited outside of defined town centres, for this proposal a sequential test has been undertaken to identify potential alternative sites for the development. The assessment, as submitted by Avison Young (AY), considers sites within Ferndown and Wimborne town centres, as well as West Moors District Centre and West Parley Local Centre, which is deemed appropriate given the site's out-of-centre location and proximity to these centres.
- 16.7.5 The results identified a number of possible sites but each was ultimately rejected for the following reasons:

*Insufficient Site Size*

Wimborne – Park Lane Car Park

The site has been assessed and found to be too small to accommodate the proposed food store. There are no known proposals to redevelop or expand the site in a way that would make it suitable. It is also located within Flood Zone 2 and has poor access for HGV servicing. The site is a well-used Council-operated car park, and there is no indication it will be made available. The site is not considered suitable for the proposed development.

Wimborne – 3–4 Crown Mead (Former M&S Unit)

The site offers a net retail sales area of only 362 sqm, which is significantly below the 1,315 sqm net sales area, it lacks dedicated parking and has inadequate servicing arrangements for proposed Aldi food store. Not suitable due to size and operational limitations.

Ferndown – Day Centre

The site has been assessed and found to be too small to accommodate the scale of development proposed by Aldi. There are no known wider redevelopment plans that would enable the site to be expanded or reconfigured to meet the requirements of the proposed food store. The site is not considered suitable for the proposed development.

Ferndown – Service Yards/Car Parks, Library Road

This site comprises service yards and car parks located off Library Road in Ferndown. It has been concluded that the site is insufficient in size to accommodate the proposed food store on its own. There is no evidence of any wider redevelopment proposals that could bring additional land into consideration. Therefore, the site is not suitable for the proposed development.

Ferndown – No.17 Victoria Road and Land to Rear

The site at No.17 Victoria Road and the land to the rear is considered too small in isolation to accommodate the proposed food store. While there is potential for amalgamation with the adjoining public house land, this would likely result in the loss of existing parking provision. Given the constraints and lack of certainty around site assembly, the site is not deemed suitable for the proposed development.

*Active Operational Use*

Wimborne – Fire and Police Stations

The Fire and Police Station sites in Wimborne are identified in the adopted Local Plan as having redevelopment potential. While the combined site could be suitable for a food store, it falls below the 0.8-hectare threshold applied by the applicant. Furthermore, both sites are in active operational use, and their redevelopment would require the relocation of

essential services. The site is not considered available and therefore not suitable for the proposed development.

Ferndown – Fire Station, Ringwood Road

The Fire Station site on Ringwood Road is currently in active operational use and, in isolation, is too small to accommodate the proposed food store. The need to relocate the fire service would present a significant barrier to availability within a reasonable timeframe. Consequently, the site is not suitable for the proposed development.

*Planning Commitments or Permissions*

Ferndown – Vacant Land South of Princes Road

This parcel of vacant land, located south of Princes Road, is too small in isolation to accommodate the proposed development and in amalgamation it would result in loss of existing parking provision. Furthermore, the site benefits from an extant planning permission for the construction of five two-bedroom terraced houses (Ref: P/FUL/2022/04737), indicating that it is unlikely to be available for retail use. The site is therefore not suitable for the proposed food store.

Table - Summary of above sites by town:

| Site                                         | Location | Reason for Unsuitability                                                                                |
|----------------------------------------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Fire and Police Stations</b>              | Wimborne | Potentially suitable in scale but currently in active use; not available within a reasonable timeframe. |
| <b>Park Lane Car Park</b>                    | Wimborne | Site is too small and lacks redevelopment potential.                                                    |
| <b>3–4 Crown Mead (Former M&amp;S Unit)</b>  | Wimborne | Retail unit is significantly undersized compared to the proposed store's requirements.                  |
| <b>Day Centre</b>                            | Ferndown | Site is too small and lacks any wider redevelopment proposals.                                          |
| <b>Service Yards/Car Parks, Library Road</b> | Ferndown | Insufficient size and no evidence of wider redevelopment potential.                                     |
| <b>No.17 Victoria Road and Land to Rear</b>  | Ferndown | Too small in isolation; amalgamation would result in loss of existing parking provision.                |
| <b>Fire Station, Ringwood Road</b>           | Ferndown | Site is in active operational use and too small; relocation of services required.                       |
| <b>Vacant Land South of Princes Road</b>     | Ferndown | Too small and has planning permission for residential development, making it unavailable.               |

- 16.7.6 Both West Moors District Centre and West Parley Local Centre were reviewed as part of the sequential site assessment, to determine whether any suitable and available sites exist that could accommodate the proposed discount food store development.
- 16.7.7 West Moors is designated as a District Centre in the adopted Local Plan. The centre is physically constrained by surrounding residential development and road infrastructure, leaving no scope for expansion. No vacant or suitably sized units were identified during the assessment that are capable of accommodating the proposed development. West Moors is therefore not considered a sequentially preferable location.
- 16.7.8 West Parley is identified as a Local Centre and comprises a small parade of retail units at the junction of Christchurch Road and New Road. All units were occupied at the time of assessment and are generally below 300 sqm in size. The centre is tightly bounded by residential development and road infrastructure, offering no realistic opportunity for expansion. Land to the east is under redevelopment for housing and is unavailable. Given the lack of suitable or available sites, and the recent delivery of a Lidl store nearby in an out-of-centre location, West Parley is not considered a sequentially preferable alternative.
- 16.7.9 While the coverage of centres is considered appropriate, several concerns have been raised regarding the methodology and assumptions adopted by AY. Notably, the assessment places undue emphasis on the specific operational requirements of a discount food store, despite the application being for a Class E(a) retail use. The sequential test should be operator-neutral, and the evolving nature of retail formats diminishes the relevance of bespoke operator requirements.
- 16.7.10 The assessment applies a minimum site threshold of 0.8 hectares, which may be overly restrictive. Smaller sites, particularly those with access to adjacent parking or redevelopment potential, should not be dismissed without further consideration. The assessment also fails to consider sites identified in the emerging Local Plan, which, although at an early stage, provides a more up-to-date indication of potential redevelopment opportunities.
- 16.7.11 It is agreed that none of the identified sites are both suitable and available for the proposed development. However, the assessment is considered incomplete due to its reliance on selected retail studies and omission of sites such as the Allenview Area in Wimborne. This site, identified in both the adopted and emerging Local Plans as an Area of Potential Change, could potentially accommodate a food store of the proposed scale. Nevertheless, in the absence of an Area Brief and uncertainty regarding availability within a reasonable timeframe, it is concluded that this site is not currently available.
- 16.7.12 Representations received from some members of the public suggest the site off Brook Road as a possible alternative suitable location. The site did not form part of the sequential test. The site is allocated within the local plan for employment and it is therefore not considered to be a suitable site.
- 16.7.13 In conclusion, while the sequential assessment submitted by AY is not without its limitations, further the Council's retail consultant independent review confirms that there are no sequentially preferable sites that are both suitable and available for the proposed development.

- 16.7.14 Based on the above, officers are satisfied that there are no appropriate alternative sites for this development and the proposal therefore meets the requirements of the sequential test as set out in the NPPF.
- 16.7.15 **With the above in mind, it is considered a limited weight is applied against the proposed development where there are no available alternative sites.**

Retail Impact Assessment (RIA)

- 16.7.16 CS Policy KS7 states that an impact assessment is also required to assess the impact on town centre vitality and viability, town centre investment plans, and the impact on allocated sites outside town centres. Impact assessments are also required for applications for retail developments over 1,000 square metres gross floorspace within Christchurch, Ferndown or Wimborne and over 500 sqm gross elsewhere (which includes Colehill).
- 16.7.17 The applicant's retail impact assessment (RIA) prepared by Avison Young (AY), has been reviewed by Council's independent retail consultant (LSH). The RIA is based on a bespoke household survey and a standard retail impact methodology. While the general approach was found sound, several assumptions and omissions have been identified which affect the robustness of the conclusions.
- 16.7.18 The household survey underpinning the RIA was conducted in March–April 2024 and gathered 500 responses across five zones. While it is considered the survey broadly covers the relevant catchment, its timing during the Easter holidays and the structure of certain questions may have influenced the results. Notably, 10% of respondents gave no answer to the main food shopping question, and some questions had low response rates. These limitations suggest that the survey findings should be treated with caution.
- 16.7.19 AY's methodology assumes that 70% of convenience expenditure is on main food shopping and 30% on top-up shopping. It also assumes equal weighting for the last two stores visited for each type of shopping with no allowance for other stores. As such, these assumptions have informed the turnover estimates and market share calculations within submitted RIA.
- 16.7.20 Trade patterns and store performance analysis from the submitted RIA, shows that over 80% of convenience expenditure in Zone 1 and over 90% in Zone 2 is retained within those zones. The main food shopping destinations for Zone 1 residents are Waitrose in Wimborne and the Tesco and Sainsbury's stores in Ferndown. Zone 2 residents primarily use the Tesco and Sainsbury's in Ferndown, with limited cross-zone shopping. The existing Lidl stores in Ferndown and West Parley have relatively low market shares, suggesting limited overlap with the proposed Aldi.
- 16.7.21 RIA forecasts that the proposed Aldi store will draw trade from a range of existing stores, with the greatest impacts expected on:
- Tesco, Ferndown: forecast 9.2% convenience impact
  - Waitrose, Wimborne: forecast 9.3% convenience impact
  - Co-op, Crown Mead (Wimborne): forecast 6.5% impact
  - Lidl, West Parley: forecast 6.0% impact

- 16.7.22 The RIA does not provide a breakdown of the expected trade draw for the comparison goods element of the proposal, which is forecast to generate £1.5 million turnover in 2028. This omission is a significant gap, as comparison sales could affect other retailers and contribute to cumulative impacts. However, this is generated by the regular rotation of comparison good items that only appear for a short period of time (comparison goods are products which are usually higher value and purchased infrequently). As such, it is considered that the proposed development would not have a significant impact on stores in the area selling comparison goods.
- 16.7.23 The assessment also does not fully consider cumulative impacts from other developments, although no major retail commitments have been identified in the wider area that would materially alter the conclusions.

Impact on Wimborne Town Centre

- 16.7.24 The Waitrose store is forecast to experience a 9.3% impact. Despite this, the centre is considered vital and viable, and no store closures are anticipated. The recent closure of the M&S Simply Food store suggests some fragility in the convenience offer, but overall impacts are not expected to be significant.

Impact on Ferndown Town Centre

- 16.7.25 The Tesco store, which anchors the centre and occupies over 30% of its floorspace, is expected to experience a notable impact. While this may increase the need for planned investment in the Penny's Walk and Victoria Road areas, the centre remains healthy with good occupancy rates. The impact is therefore considered adverse but not significantly adverse.

Impact on West Moors District Centre

- 16.7.26 No significant impact is expected. The Tesco Express in the centre is unlikely to be affected due to the presence of an existing Lidl nearby.

Impact on West Parley Local Centre

- 16.7.27 Minimal direct impact is expected on the Tesco Express. However, the new Aldi may reduce linked trips currently associated with the nearby Lidl, which could have indirect effects.

Impact on other stores

- 16.7.28 Some impact is expected on smaller out-of-centre stores such as the Co-op in Colehill and One Stop at Dales Drive. However, as these are not within defined centres, the impacts are not material in planning terms.
- 16.7.29 Paragraphs 94 and 95 of the NPPF note:

*94. When assessing applications for retail and leisure development outside town centres, which are not in accordance with an up-to-date plan, local planning authorities should require an impact assessment if the development is over a proportionate, locally set floorspace threshold (if there is no locally set threshold, the default threshold is 2,500m<sup>2</sup> of gross floorspace). This should include assessment of:*

*a) the impact of the proposal on existing, committed and planned public and private investment in a centre or centres in the catchment area of the proposal; and*

*b) the impact of the proposal on town centre vitality and viability, including local consumer choice and trade in the town centre and the wider retail catchment (as applicable to the scale and nature of the scheme).*

*95. Where an application fails to satisfy the sequential test or is likely to have significant adverse impact on one or more of the considerations in paragraph 94 it should be refused.*

16.7.30 The Council's retail consultant (LSH) has considered the retail impact assessment provided by the applicant and while the RIA is incomplete in some respects and particularly regarding comparison goods and cumulative impacts, the overall conclusion is that the proposed Aldi store would result in adverse but not significantly adverse impacts on the defined centres of Wimborne and Ferndown. Impacts on West Moors and West Parley are expected to be minimal. This being the case, the proposal is considered acceptable with regards to paragraph 95 of the NPPF, where the application should only be refused where the harm is significantly adverse.

16.7.31 **As the retail impact is not significantly adverse it is considered this issue is attributed limited weight against the development.**

## **16.8 Economic benefits**

16.8.1 The applicant has indicated that the proposed food store is expected to generate between 30 – 35 full time positions. In addition, the construction phase is anticipated to provide temporary employment for local contractors and tradespeople. These economic benefits are afforded limited weight in the overall planning balance, taking into account other material planning considerations.

16.8.2 **Taking into consideration the somewhat limited associated economic benefits, they are attributed limited weight in favour of the development.**

## **16.9 Design and impact on the character of the area**

16.9.1 The Dorset Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) identifies the application site as overlapping two Landscape Character Types (LCTs). The western portion lies within the Urban LCT, while the eastern portion falls within the Heath/Forest Mosaic LCT, specifically within the Ferndown Forest–Staplehill Landscape Character Area (LCA). This LCA is characterised by a patchwork of heathland, forest and scrub, interspersed with conifer plantations and influenced by urban fringe elements such as residential development and transport corridors. However, the Senior Landscape Architect notes that the site's character aligns more closely with its surrounding urban and peri-urban context than with the Heath/Forest Mosaic LCT.

16.9.2 Although the site is not located within a nationally designated landscape, the southern portion lies within the designated South East Dorset Green Belt. Several heritage assets are located within a 1km radius, including Scheduled Monuments (bowl barrows located

approximately 468m and 690m to the west) and Listed Buildings (Fox and Hounds Public House – 380m south; Manor House and associated walls – 433m; and the Lodge to Canford Magna House – 640m).

- 16.9.3 Topographically, the site lies on relatively level ground at approximately 25m AOD, gently sloping southwards towards the River Stour (c.15m AOD). To the north, the land rises steadily to around 65–70m AOD at Cannon Hill.
- 16.9.4 As previously described, the site comprises two distinct elements. The northern portion accommodates an accident and repair centre, employment buildings, and associated hardstanding. The southern portion consists of grassland and scrub, bordered by mature conifer trees. The site is bounded to the south by the Canford Bottom roundabout, a major junction connecting the A31 and B3073. Surrounding land uses include residential properties to the north and west, employment uses to the northeast, and open countryside to the east and south.
- 16.9.5 The submitted Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) concludes that the site and its immediate context are of medium landscape value. The Council's Senior Landscape Architect concurs with this assessment and notes that the site is visually contained, with a limited visual envelope. Views are largely confined to nearby roads, residential properties, and public rights of way (PRoW), with wider views restricted by topography, vegetation, and built form.
- 16.9.6 Views are generally filtered by the existing conifer boundary. The site is most visible from Canford Bottom Road, the roundabout, and sections of the Castleman Trailway. Wider views are restricted by topography, vegetation, and built form. The most rural views are from the east and southwest, where the site is seen in the context of open countryside and woodland backdrops.
- 16.9.7 The proposed development would result in the removal of a significant belt of mature Leyland Cypress trees along the southern boundary to facilitate vehicular access and car parking. While these trees are not protected and are of poor quality, their removal will reduce year-round screening. The proposed replacement planting comprises deciduous native species, which will not replicate the existing level of visual screening.
- 16.9.8 Officers consider that a mixed planting scheme incorporating native and non-native evergreen and deciduous species would improve year-round screening and biodiversity. While the use of native species is encouraged, National Highways has requested that specific tree species be used adjacent to the strategic road network. This matter is addressed in further detail in Section 16.10 Impact on Trees and Landscape Proposal.
- 16.9.9 Additionally, officers have raised concerns regarding the absence of tree planting within the hard surfaced car parking areas. The introduction of trees in these areas, using structural soil systems such as GreenBlue Urban's Arborsystem (or similar), would help soften the visual impact of the development and enhance landscape quality.
- 16.9.10 As these details have not been requested or secured at this stage, should the application be approved a condition be imposed requiring the submission and approval of a comprehensive soft and hard landscaping scheme is recommended. This should include a detailed planting schedule, with specific reference to tree species selection and placement, particularly in relation to the highway boundaries and internal parking areas.

- 16.9.11 Turning to the design, the single-storey nature of the proposed design will help to mitigate its visual impact to some extent. However, it is recognised that the site is currently partially undeveloped, and as such, the development will result in a noticeable change to the visual character of the area. In particular, the introduction of a new vehicular access point along the western boundary will create a gap, resulting in a more open frontage.
- 16.9.12 The entrance façade features glazing, enhancing natural daylight within the retail space. Although not part of this application, it is anticipated that internally illuminated signage will be required and will contribute to the building's increased prominence within the street scene. This visual impact will be further emphasised by the removal of existing mature conifer trees, which are to be replaced with new landscaping. It is acknowledged that the new planting will require time to establish and mature, during which the building will be more visually prominent.
- 16.9.13 The building will be set back from the road by approximately 34 to 37 metres at the point of the new access, which will help reduce its dominance within the street scene. However, this benefit is somewhat offset by the introduction of an approximately 30-metre-wide open frontage, comprising hard landscaping and associated car parking, which will increase the development's visual presence. A cantilevered canopy defines the entrance, offering shelter for customers and the adjacent trolley bay, with no additional trolley bays proposed within the car park.
- 16.9.14 The delivery and service yard are positioned along the northern boundary, screened from public view and neighbouring properties. Similarly, the external plant compound is located to the rear of the store, minimising visual and acoustic impact.
- 16.9.15 The proposal includes the provision of 120 car parking spaces, which will inevitably have an impact on the character of the area. It should be noted, the layout of accessible parking spaces (6 disabled and 4 EV spaces) is non-compliant with BS8300 and Part M of the Building Regulations. Should the application be approved, the amendments are recommended to ensure appropriate access zones are provided on both sides and at the ends of designated bays.
- 16.9.16 As previously noted, a landscaping scheme has been submitted to help visually soften this impact. The scheme seeks to retain as much of the existing hedgerow and tree cover as is practicable. To safeguard the visual amenity these features provide, a planning condition would be necessary to ensure that all retained trees are appropriately protected throughout the construction phase.
- 16.9.17 Potential conflicts between proposed lighting columns and tree canopy spread have also been identified. Again, in the event the planning application is approved, these should be resolved prior to determination or secured via condition to ensure compatibility between landscape and lighting elements.
- 16.9.18 In terms of servicing, the proposed development will generate both recyclable materials and general waste. The submitted Design and Access Statement confirms that Aldi's standardised operational waste management strategy will be implemented at the site. This includes clearly segregated storage for recyclable waste streams, including food waste, as well as the use of a baler or compactor for cardboard waste. All waste types, including recyclables, will be backhauled via Aldi's logistics network to their Regional Distribution Centres (RDCs) for further processing or recycling. This approach is considered acceptable and is likely to result in less visual impact than the use of external bin stores.

- 16.9.19 The proposed development includes a range of boundary treatments intended to delineate the site and provide appropriate levels of screening and security. A 1.8m high close-boarded timber fence is proposed along the northern and north-eastern boundaries, providing separation between the application site and the adjacent employment/industrial premises, as well as residential properties located within Fryer's Copse. This form of fencing may be considered appropriate in this context, offering a balance between privacy and visual amenity.
- 16.9.20 To the western boundary, which adjoins the rear of the residential property at No. 24 Canford Bottom, the applicant proposes a 2.4-metre-high palisade fence. This type of fencing, typically comprising vertical steel pales with pointed tops, is designed for high-security environments and is commonly used around industrial and infrastructure sites. While effective in deterring unauthorised access, palisade fencing is generally regarded as visually intrusive and out of character in residential settings.
- 16.9.21 Given its industrial appearance and potential adverse impact on residential amenity, the use of palisade fencing in this location is considered inappropriate. This matter is discussed in further detail in Section 16.12 – Residential Amenity of this report.
- 16.9.22 In addition to the boundary treatments proposed elsewhere on the site, the applicant proposes the installation of a timber knee rail with new hedgerow planting along the western and south-western boundaries, extending from the site frontage on Canford Bottom Road to the Canford Bottom Roundabout which is considered appropriate in this location.
- 16.9.23 Along the southern, south-eastern, and eastern boundaries adjacent to the roundabout, the existing post and rail fence is to be renewed, with a new hedgerow planted behind it. While this approach is considered visually appropriate and generally in keeping with the character of the surrounding area, it raises concerns from a highways perspective.
- 16.9.24 Specifically, this form of boundary treatment would not provide adequate screening to mitigate headlight glare from vehicles within the proposed car park. Given the proximity to the A31 and the potential for glare to distract road users, this treatment is considered inappropriate in highway safety terms. This issue is examined in further detail in Section 16.11 – Highway Safety, Access and Parking of this report.
- 16.9.25 The proposed development will result in a noticeable change to the visual and spatial character of the site, introducing a commercial building and associated infrastructure into a currently undeveloped area. However, the Council's Senior Landscape Architect has confirmed that the landscape and visual impacts are not considered significant enough to warrant refusal, subject to appropriate mitigation.
- 16.9.26 While the initial impact is assessed as Major/Moderate Adverse, the proposed planting scheme is expected to reduce this to Minor Adverse over time. The site is visually contained, and the development is unlikely to have a significant impact on the wider landscape character or nationally designated sites.
- 16.9.27 Concerns regarding the lack of tree planting within the car park, species selection, accessible parking layout, and lighting placement have been raised. However, in the event of planning approval, these matters can be addressed through the imposition of suitably worded planning conditions, ensuring the delivery of a high-quality landscape scheme.

16.9.28 Subject to above conditions, the development would not result in unacceptable harm to the character or appearance of the area and the proposal would be broadly compliant with the aims of Policies HE2 and HE3 of the Local Plan and paragraphs 135 and 136 of the NPPF.

16.9.29 **With the above in mind, the impact on the character of the area is attributed limited weight against the development.**

#### **16.10 Impact on protected trees and proposed landscaping**

16.10.1 Part of the application site is subject to Tree Preservation Order (TPO) Group Order HA/56, dated 18 June 1984, which includes Oak, Ash, Beech, Birch, Elm, Rowan, Sweet Chestnut, and Hawthorn. The site is also bounded to the east, south, and south-west by a tall Leyland cypress hedge, which provides effective screening from adjacent industrial units and contributes to the visual character of the roundabout setting.

16.10.2 An Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) and Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS), prepared by Tyler Grange, have been submitted in support of the application. The AIA confirms that the proposed development would necessitate the removal of approximately 87 trees, primarily comprising a linear group of Category B Leyland cypress along the southern boundary. While these trees offer moderate collective value, they are considered to have limited longevity due to species characteristics and planting density. Their removal is required to facilitate site access, internal circulation, and car parking. A small number of Category C and U trees are also proposed for removal due to poor condition or limited arboricultural merit. No Category A (high value) trees are present within or adjacent to the site. All trees subject to TPOs that are proposed to be retained will be protected throughout the construction process.

16.10.3 The proposed landscaping scheme includes the planting of 19 new trees and over 3,000 hedgerow plants, with additional off-site measures proposed to achieve a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain.

16.10.4 National Highways has reviewed the proposed landscaping and boundary treatments, particularly in relation to the site's proximity to the A31 trunk road. Concerns have been raised regarding the suitability of certain proposed species due to safety, liability, and maintenance implications. Specifically, species such as Blackthorn, Goat Willow, Crack Willow, Dogwood, Italian Alder, Cherry, Quaking Aspen, and Wild Privet should not be planted within 10 metres of the Strategic Road Network (SRN) boundary. Additionally, species such as Silver Birch, Austrian Pine, Poplar, and English/Sessile Oak must not be positioned where, at maturity, they could pose a risk to the carriageway or associated infrastructure. The planting of Ash and Larch is also discouraged due to disease susceptibility.

16.10.5 The proposed post-and-rail fencing and native hedge are not considered sufficient to screen vehicle headlights from the A31. A more robust boundary treatment, such as a close-boarded fence, is likely to be required to mitigate glare and distraction risks to road users.

16.10.6 Officers reviewed both the original and revised landscape proposals. While the site includes trees subject to TPOs, the trees proposed for removal are of limited arboricultural

value and do not merit TPO designation. Interior trees lack public visibility, and the Leyland cypress along the southern boundary are of poor form, with adjacent Oak trees exhibiting suppression and asymmetry.

- 16.10.7 The Tree Officer raises no objection to the proposed removals as set out in the Tree Retention and Removal Plan. However, concerns remain regarding the robustness of tree protection measures and their compatibility with the proposed drainage layout. All underground services must be routed outside RPAs, and protective fencing must comply with BS5837:2012.
- 16.10.8 The revised landscaping scheme represents an improvement over the initial submission but is still considered insufficient in providing year-round screening along the southern boundary. A more diverse planting palette, including native and non-native evergreen and deciduous species was recommended to maintain the verdant character of the area.
- 16.10.9 In light of National Highways' comments, the Tree Officer has requested that a condition be imposed requiring the submission and approval of a revised landscaping scheme, should planning permission be granted. This revised scheme must address species selection and boundary treatment in accordance with National Highways' requirements. Given the site's proximity to the A31, careful consideration must be given to the use of appropriate species and forms that are suitable for the location and context.
- 16.10.11 Subject to the inclusion of conditions ensuring pre-commencement site meetings, robust tree protection, revised drainage alignment, detailed specifications for surfacing within RPAs and submission of detailed AMS, there is no arboricultural objection to the proposed development.
- 16.10.12 To address National Highways' concerns, it is also recommended that a pre-commencement condition be imposed requiring the submission and approval of a detailed boundary treatment and landscaping plan. This must include an Arboricultural Tree Survey, Tree Protection Plan, and full specifications for all proposed planting and screening features, ensuring that all mitigation is contained within the development site and does not rely on the SRN soft estate.
- 16.10.13 Taking the above into account, it is the officer's view that, subject to the recommended conditions, the proposal is acceptable in terms of arboricultural and landscaping matters and accords with Policies HE2 and HE3 of the Core Strategy.
- 16.10.14 In the planning balance, moderate weight should be attributed in favour of the development, given the limited public amenity value and arboricultural merit of the trees to be removed, the proposed mitigation measures and the overall compliance with policy. However, in the absence of the recommended conditions, particularly those relating to boundary treatment and species selection, significant weight would need to be attributed against the development due to potential visual and highway safety impacts.
- 16.10.15 **Accordingly, the matter of trees and landscaping is attributed limited weight against the development in the absence of appropriate mitigation.**

## **16.11 Highway Safety, Access and Parking**

### Access, Transport and Parking

- 16.11.1 The application seeks full planning permission for the development of a 1,780 sqm food store, incorporating 120 car parking spaces. The proposal includes the formation of a new vehicular and pedestrian access from the C50 Canford Bottom road.
- 16.11.2 The site lies adjacent to the northern boundary of the A31 Canford Bottom roundabout, situated between Wimborne and Ferndown. Existing access is currently provided via a private drive serving vehicle repair buildings, with an additional field gate access located further south along Canford Bottom. The application has been reviewed by both National Highways, as the authority responsible for the Strategic Road Network (SRN), and Dorset Council in its capacity as the Local Highway Authority.
- 16.11.3 Concerns have been raised by third parties regarding pedestrian, cyclist, and schoolchild safety. It is noted that footways and street lighting are present along Canford Bottom and surrounding roads. While the site is in proximity to off-road cycle routes, it does not directly connect to them. Both Wimborne and Ferndown are within a reasonable cycling distance. Signal-controlled pedestrian crossings are available at the Canford Bottom roundabout, and current traffic volumes (700–800 vehicles/hour during peak times; 650 vehicles/hour at weekend peaks) are such that they allow for reasonable gaps in traffic for uncontrolled pedestrian crossings.
- 16.11.4 Further representations have expressed concern regarding the adequacy of public transport provision. However, bus stops with regular services are located within 400 metres of the proposed store. These stops are equipped with shelters, seating, and lighting. The bus service provides connections between Bournemouth town centre and Wimborne, with additional links to West Parley, Ferndown, Stapehill, and Leigh Road.
- 16.11.5 An assessment of the most recent personal injury collision data indicates no recorded incidents along the Canford Bottom frontage of the site. Local collision data does not suggest any pattern of concern and incidents are attributed to driver error.
- 16.11.6 The proposed site access will take the form of a priority junction with all-turning movements, including a dedicated right-turn lane, as shown on drawing no. 001 Rev F. The access design incorporates 2-metre-wide footways, dropped kerbs with tactile paving, and street lighting.
- 16.11.7 Concerns have also been raised regarding potential congestion and queuing back to the Canford Bottom roundabout. The inclusion of a right-turn lane is intended to allow vehicles turning into the site to wait without impeding through traffic, thereby reducing the risk of queuing at the A31 junction. A further right-turn lane is proposed for southbound vehicles accessing the adjacent service road. Due to the proximity of the junction to a bend in the road, the proposed layout does not fully comply with Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) standards. A Departure from Standards has therefore been authorised by Dorset Highways, with justification provided within submitted Briefing Note 1 Transport.
- 16.11.8 Visibility splays have been demonstrated in accordance with recorded vehicle speeds; 26 mph northbound and 26.5 mph southbound. Although the junction is located near a bend, the required stopping sight distances have been achieved. The access design has undergone a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit, and all issues raised have been addressed.
- 16.11.9 National Highways has confirmed that the proposed access arrangements are acceptable in principle and will not adversely affect the safe and efficient operation of the A31.

- 16.11.10 The proposed internal site layout has been designed to ensure safe and convenient access for all users. It includes dedicated pedestrian and cyclist routes from Canford Bottom to the store entrance, clear circulation space for customers within the car park, and appropriate manoeuvring areas for HGV deliveries. A Swept Path Analysis, submitted as drawing no. 002 Rev C, demonstrates that articulated delivery vehicles can safely access and egress the site and manoeuvre within the delivery bay without conflict with customer movements.
- 16.11.12 Cycle parking provision includes 8 spaces for customers, slightly exceeding the adopted standards. Additional secure cycle storage for staff is proposed within the building, reflecting the longer duration of staff stays and supporting sustainable travel choices.
- 16.11.13 The car park provides a total of 120 spaces, equating to approximately 1 space per 16 sqm of retail floor area. While this is marginally below the adopted parking standards, the applicant has submitted robust evidence demonstrating that the proposed level of provision is appropriate for the anticipated demand. The evidence indicates that the parking provision is sufficient to meet operational and customer needs without resulting in overspill parking on surrounding roads. Furthermore, avoiding an over-provision of parking supports the promotion of active and sustainable travel modes.
- 16.11.14 The car park layout includes designated disabled bays and parent-and-child spaces, both located close to the store entrance. Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCPs) are also incorporated, with 4 active and 20 passive spaces provided to future-proof the development. Additional road markings are proposed at the car park entrance to improve clarity and safety. The layout is consistent with similar retail developments in the local area.
- 16.11.15 National Highways has withdrawn its objection to the scheme, subject to conditions. However, it has requested that Dorset Council, as the Local Highway Authority, consider implementing parking restrictions in the vicinity of the site access to ensure highway safety and maintain traffic flow.
- 16.11.16 As part of the proposed mitigation, a new signal-controlled pedestrian crossing is to be delivered. While a Toucan crossing was initially requested, technical constraints have prevented its implementation at this time. Briefing Note 1 outlines the reasons for this. Nonetheless, safe alternative routes for cyclists to access the store are available.
- 16.11.17 The proposed footways within and through the site support modal choice and encourage walking and cycling. The inclusion of internal cycle storage for staff further supports sustainable commuting options.
- 16.11.18 Overall, the proposal is considered to provide safe and suitable access for all users and would not result in a severe residual cumulative impact on the local or strategic highway network. The development is therefore considered to comply with Policies KS11 and KS12 of the adopted Core Strategy and the relevant provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), particularly Paragraphs 110–113.
- 16.11.19 As previously mentioned in this report, the National Highways concerns regarding proposed post-and-rail fencing and native hedge are not considered sufficient to screen vehicle headlights from the A31. A more robust boundary treatment, such as a close-boarded fence, is likely to be required to mitigate glare and distraction risks to road users.

16.11.20 Should planning permission be granted, the following matters should be secured by condition:

- Construction of the access and visibility splays;
- Implementation of the signal-controlled pedestrian crossing;
- Submission and approval of a Construction Traffic Management Plan;
- Submission and approval of a Delivery Management Plan;
- Implementation of the Travel Plan;
- Provision of parking, loading, and cycle facilities prior to occupation;
- Installation of external lighting and landscaping including boundary treatments to mitigate impacts on the Strategic Road Network.

**16.11.21 In conclusion, the highway impacts of the development are attributed limited weight against the proposal. The associated highway improvements are considered neutral, as they are necessary to mitigate the development's impacts.**

#### Traffic movement

16.11.22 A significant proportion of third-party representations relate to concerns over increased traffic, congestion, accident risk, and the accuracy of traffic modelling. These matters have been addressed through the submitted Transport Assessment (TA), which has been reviewed and approved by the Local Highway Authority and National Highways.

16.11.23 The site currently accommodates some commercial uses. To establish a baseline, the industry-standard TRICS database was used to assess existing trip generation. The selection criteria used are considered representative of the site's location and characteristics. The existing use generates approximately 26 trips during the AM peak hour, 16 trips during the PM peak hour, and 21 trips during the Saturday peak hour (11:00–12:00).

16.11.24 The proposed development is forecast to generate 56 trips in the AM peak, 144 trips in the PM peak, and 206 trips during the Saturday peak hour. These figures represent net person trips (i.e. proposed minus existing). It is widely recognised that new food stores typically generate a relatively low proportion of wholly new trips, as most customers are already making similar journeys to other stores. Instead, trips are largely diverted from existing retail destinations.

16.11.25 It is anticipated that 74% of diverted trade will originate from the Ferndown direction, 14% from Wimborne, and the remainder from the A31. These trips are therefore already present on the network and would simply be redistributed to the new store. The overall increase in traffic is considered modest in the context of the existing highway network.

16.11.26 Section 6 of the TA outlines delivery and servicing arrangements. Two articulated lorries are expected to visit the site daily, supplemented by a small number of smaller HGVs for local produce. A Swept Path Analysis confirms that articulated vehicles can safely access, manoeuvre within, and exit the site. Delivery times are scheduled and coordinated with the store manager to ensure efficient operations. These arrangements can be secured via a Delivery Management Plan condition.

16.11.27 The proposed access junction has been subject to capacity testing, which demonstrates that the right-turn lane is sufficient to accommodate expected demand. The junction is predicted to operate well within capacity, with minimal delays and no blocking back to the

A31 Canford Bottom roundabout. The inclusion of a signal-controlled pedestrian crossing has not adversely affected junction performance.

16.11.28 The development is also supported by a Travel Plan aimed at promoting sustainable travel and reducing reliance on single-occupancy car use. The measures within the Travel Plan can also be secured by condition.

16.11.29 The Local Highway Authority has confirmed that the proposal would not result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety or a severe residual cumulative impact on the road network. This conclusion aligns with Paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which states that: *'Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.'*

16.11.30 The submitted TA demonstrates that the proposed development would result in a modest increase in traffic, with the majority of trips being diverted from existing stores. The proposed access junction is forecast to operate within capacity, and no adverse impacts on the A31 roundabout are anticipated.

16.11.31 **With the above in mind the issue of the impact on highway safety and the road network is therefore attributed limited weight against the proposal. Given the modest traffic increase, the redistribution of existing trips, and the provision of safe and efficient access, it is appropriate to attribute limited weight against the development in relation to traffic movement.**

## **16.12    Neighbouring Amenity**

16.12.1 The application site lies within a predominantly residential area, although part of the site and the adjacent land at No. 32 Canford Bottom are in general industrial use. The neighbouring industrial unit is not subject to restrictions on operational hours or noise emissions. To the southeast, the A31 and Canford Bottom roundabout generate significant traffic noise, despite speed limitations. Consequently, existing residential properties in the vicinity are already exposed to a degree of industrial and traffic-related noise pollution.

16.12.2 The current light industrial use of the site is considered to have a relatively limited impact on neighbouring amenity in terms of noise, traffic movements, hours of operation, and associated environmental effects such as air and light pollution. In contrast, the proposed retail use is likely to intensify these impacts.

16.12.3 Concerns have been raised regarding the potential effects of the proposed store on nearby residential properties, particularly in relation to noise, light, air pollution and antisocial behaviour. The closest residential dwelling is No. 24 Canford Bottom, a former railway cottage situated on a small plot around which the proposed site wraps. Other residential properties lie to the north in Fryer's Copse, approximately 7 metres from the loading bay, 9 metres from the nearest car parking spaces, and 14 metres from the store building. To the west, residential properties across Canford Bottom Road are located approximately 18–25 metres from the car park and a minimum of 42 metres from the store building.

16.12.4 The most significant potential impact is on No. 24 Canford Bottom, which lies just 1.2 metres from the proposed car park boundary. Although this property currently adjoins the

parking area of the existing industrial unit, the frequency and intensity of vehicle movements associated with the proposed retail use are expected to be greater.

### Noise

- 16.12.5 The submitted Environmental Noise Assessment by Sharps Redmore evaluated the operational noise impacts of the proposed Aldi store, including car park activity. The closest receptor, No. 24 Canford Bottom, is approximately 5 metres from the nearest parking bays (from its rear elevation). Predicted peak car park noise levels are 41 dB LAeq,1hr, accounting for distance attenuation and a proposed 2-metre-high solid boundary fence, which would provide approximately 13 dB of acoustic screening. These levels are significantly below existing ambient noise levels and the WHO daytime guideline values, and the assessment concludes that car park activity would not result in a significant adverse impact on residential amenity.
- 16.12.6 The current site plan proposes a 2.4-metre-high palisade fence along the western boundary, which would not provide the necessary acoustic screening. This is considered inappropriate and would result in harm to residential amenity. This issue could be addressed by conditioning the installation of a 2-metre-high solid acoustic fence, as recommended in the Noise Impact Assessment.
- 16.12.7 Delivery operations are proposed to commence at 06:00 hours. Predicted delivery noise levels at the nearest receptors (Nos. 24 and 42 Canford Bottom and 18 Fryers Close) range from 36–38 dB LAeq,1hr during the day and 41–44 dB LAeq,15min in the early morning. These levels fall below WHO thresholds and are therefore classified as having a low impact. Peak noise levels (LAm<sub>ax</sub>) from delivery events are also within acceptable limits, particularly with the proposed 2-metre-high acoustic fencing along the northern and western boundaries. The current plan includes a 1.8-metre-high close-boarded timber fence, but it is unclear whether this is acoustic. A condition requiring a 2-metre-high acoustic fence would be necessary to ensure acceptability.
- 16.12.8 Fixed mechanical plant, likely including refrigeration and ventilation equipment, is proposed to the rear (east) of the store. The Environmental Noise Assessment recommends that plant noise should not exceed 40 dB LAeq during the day and 25 dB LAeq at night, measured at the nearest noise-sensitive premises. Compliance should be verified in accordance with BS 4142:2014+A1:2019 and secured via condition.
- 16.12.9 A substation is proposed approximately 2.7 metres from No. 24 Canford Bottom. While its footprint is modest (approximately 3.3 square metres), further details are required. A condition should be imposed to ensure the substation is designed to protect neighbouring amenity, particularly in terms of acoustic screening, if the application were to be approved.
- 16.12.10 The proposed store would operate from 08:00 to 22:00 Monday to Saturday and for six hours on Sundays (10:00–18:00), in line with Sunday Trading Laws. No specific information was provided for Bank Holidays, but it is assumed these would follow Sunday hours.
- 16.12.11 DC Environmental Health officers have reviewed the Noise Assessment and supports its conclusions. They recommend that the following be secured via planning conditions should consent be granted, a condition is recommended:
- Limiting fixed plant noise emissions to 40 dB LAeq (day) and 25 dB LAeq (night)

- Restricting trading hours to 07:00–23:00 and servicing hours to 06:00–23:00
- Installation of acoustic fencing to mitigate operational noise

#### Air quality and pollution

- 16.12.12 Submitted Air Quality Assessment by Entran Ltd. evaluated both construction and operational impacts. The site presents a medium risk of dust soiling and a low risk to human health during construction. With appropriate mitigation, such as a Dust Management Plan (DMP) in line with IAQM guidance, residual impacts are considered negligible.
- 16.12.13 Dispersion modelling using ADMS-Roads software has been undertaken to assess the impact of additional traffic generated by the development on concentrations of nitrogen dioxide at nearby residential receptors. The results indicates that pollutant concentrations at all assessed receptors are well below Air Quality Objectives (AQOs), with changes attributable to the development deemed negligible. The site is not within or adjacent to an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), and background pollutant levels are low.
- 16.12.14 The assessment concludes that the development will not result in any significant deterioration in local air quality, nor will it expose future users of the site to unacceptable levels of air pollution.
- 16.12.15 The Environmental Health Team supports the findings and recommends conditioning the mitigation measures outlined in Section 6 of the submitted Air Quality Assessment report should consent be granted. The report includes the following mitigation measures:
- Construction Phase: A condition should be imposed requiring the submission and approval of a Dust Management Plan (DMP) prior to commencement of development. This should incorporate the IAQM's 'highly recommended' mitigation measures appropriate to the identified risk level.
  - Operational Phase: No specific air quality mitigation is required. However, the implementation of the Staff Travel Plan, which promotes sustainable travel modes, is supported and should be secured through a planning obligation or condition.
  - Monitoring: While not deemed necessary based on the assessment findings, the Local Planning Authority may consider requiring periodic compliance checks during construction to ensure adherence to the DMP.
- 16.12.16 The air quality assessment demonstrates that the proposed development will not result in significant adverse impacts on residential amenity or public health. Subject to the recommended mitigation measures during construction, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of air quality.

#### Anti-social behaviour

- 16.12.17 Concerns have been raised by third parties regarding the potential for antisocial behaviour within the supermarket car park during non-operational hours, particularly given its proximity to residential properties. While the applicant has not proposed specific mitigation measures at this stage, it is considered that the installation of entry barriers could offer a practical and proportionate solution.

16.12.18 Should the application be approved, it is recommended that a condition be attached requiring the installation of automated entry barriers to control access to the car park outside of store opening hours. This would help deter inappropriate use of the space, enhance site security, and protect the amenity of nearby residents. The barriers should be programmed to align with store operating times and allow for emergency access where necessary.

#### Pedestrian crossing

16.12.19 Concerns have been raised by a third party regarding the proposed pedestrian crossing, specifically in relation to potential light disturbance from the associated traffic signals. As outlined earlier in this report, the application has been amended to substitute the originally proposed toucan crossing with a pelican crossing. A toucan crossing facilitates use by both pedestrians and cyclists, whereas a pelican crossing is designed exclusively for pedestrian use and is operated via push-button controls. Given that this amendment constitutes a downgrading of the crossing type without altering its location, it was not considered to necessitate re-consultation or the display of a revised site notice.

16.12.20 The pelican crossing includes a flashing amber phase, during which drivers may proceed if the crossing is clear. This phase may result in intermittent light disturbance, particularly during evening and night-time hours, potentially affecting the amenity of nearby residential properties. While the application is recommended for refusal, in the event that planning permission is granted, it is recommended that a condition be imposed requiring the installation of directional hoods or shields, and the use of low-intensity LED signal units. These measures would serve to reduce light spill and minimise glare into residential properties, while maintaining adequate visibility for road users.

16.12.21 Should planning permission be granted, it is recommended that a condition be attached requiring the implementation of a post-installation monitoring and review mechanism. This would enable the assessment of any ongoing amenity impacts and facilitate appropriate mitigation where necessary.

#### Light pollution

16.12.22 Furthermore, there is likely to be a degree of light spill from the car park into neighbouring properties. In order to protect their amenity and also for biodiversity interests a condition would need to be applied in relation to the lighting in the car park if the development was approved. This will be addressed further in Section 16.14: Biodiversity. A Construction Management Plan should also be secured by condition to minimise disruption to neighbouring residents.

16.12.23 Finally, the proposed landscaping scheme includes native hedgerow and tree planting along the northern and western boundaries, which will, over time, enhance privacy and reduce visual and acoustic impacts. A condition will be applied to ensure implementation should the application be approved.

16.12.24 The proposed development has been assessed in terms of its impact on neighbouring amenity, particularly with regard to noise, air quality, light pollution, and privacy. Subject to the implementation of the recommended mitigation measures, secured through planning conditions, the development is not considered to result in significant adverse impacts on residential amenity.

16.12.25 The proposal is therefore considered to be in accordance with the Policy HE2 of the Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy as well as the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024, which seeks to ensure a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

16.12.26 In the planning balance, moderate weight should be attributed in favour of the development, given the mitigation measures proposed and the overall compliance with policy. However, without the recommended conditions, particularly those relating to acoustic fencing and operational controls, significant weight would need to be given against the development due to the potential for harm to neighbouring amenity.

16.12.27 **With the above in mind the issue of impact on neighbouring amenity is therefore attributed limited weight against the development.**

### **16.13 Flood Risk and Drainage**

16.13.1 The application site lies within Flood Zone 1, as defined by the Environment Agency's Flood Map for Planning, indicating a very low probability of fluvial flooding. The site is also identified as being at low risk of groundwater emergence and is not significantly affected by surface water flooding. As such, the site is considered suitable for the proposed development in terms of flood risk vulnerability.

16.13.2 The applicant has submitted a Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy (Craddys, Ref: 13196, Rev P01, dated 28 March 2024), which includes ground investigation results and outlines the proposed surface water drainage arrangements. The key elements of the proposed strategy include:

- Discharge of surface water to the public surface water sewer, as infiltration is not viable due to ground conditions.
- Use of underground attenuation tanks to manage runoff, with a total storage volume of approximately 450m<sup>3</sup>.
- A stormceptor device to improve water quality by removing contaminants from car park runoff.
- A proposed discharge rate of 2.5 litres per second, equivalent to the greenfield QBAR rate, representing a betterment over existing runoff conditions.
- Provision of exceedance flow routes, which have been reviewed and accepted by the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA).

16.13.3 Initially, the LLFA issued a holding objection (dated 11 September 2024) due to the absence of in-principle approval from Wessex Water to connect to the public surface water sewer. This matter was subsequently resolved with the submission of an email from Wessex Water (dated 15 October 2024), confirming their agreement in principle to the proposed connection.

16.13.4 Following receipt of this confirmation, the LLFA withdrew their objection, subject to the imposition of the following conditions:

- Pre-commencement condition requiring submission and approval of a detailed surface water management scheme, including arrangements for managing runoff during construction.
- Pre-occupation condition requiring submission and approval of a long-term maintenance and management plan for the drainage system, including adoption arrangements and responsibilities for ongoing operation.

- 16.13.5 These conditions are considered necessary to ensure the development does not increase flood risk elsewhere, protects water quality, and secures the long-term functionality of the drainage infrastructure.
- 16.13.6 The proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable in terms of flood risk and surface water drainage and compliant with Policy ME6 of Corse Strategy subject to conditions requiring a detailed surface water management scheme and management and maintenance of the scheme have been provided.
- 16.13.7 **With the above in mind the issue of flood risk and drainage is therefore attributed no weight against the development.**

#### **16.14 Impact on Biodiversity and BNG**

##### Ecology

- 16.14.1 An Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Statement, dated 20 March 2025, have been prepared by Tyler Grange Group Ltd in support of the planning application for the proposed food store development. Ecological surveys identified habitats of low to moderate ecological value, including; other neutral grassland (poor condition), scattered native trees (moderate condition) and leyland cypress tree lines (poor condition).
- 16.14.2 Areas of urban hardstanding and existing buildings were assessed as having negligible ecological value. Protected and priority species potentially present on site include bats, birds, badgers, hedgehogs, and reptiles, most notably a robust population of slow worms. No evidence was found of dormice or great crested newts.
- 16.14.3 The species-specific mitigation within the submitted EcIA includes:
- Badgers: Pre-construction surveys and protective measures during works.
  - Bats: Installation of bat boxes and sensitive lighting to avoid light spill.
  - Birds: Timing of vegetation clearance outside nesting season or pre-works checks by an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW).
  - Hedgehogs: Permeable fencing and construction safeguards.
  - Reptiles: Habitat manipulation and creation of hibernacula and log piles.
- 16.14.4 The Dorset Council Natural Environment Team (NET) has reviewed and approved the EcIA, issuing a Certificate of Approval on 20 March 2025. NET has raised no objections, subject to the full implementation of the approved EcIA. This must be secured by condition to ensure compliance with wildlife legislation, local planning policy, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024), and Natural England's Protected Species Standing Advice.
- 16.14.5 The EcIA also includes commitments to prepare a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), a Reptile Mitigation Strategy, and a Lighting Strategy. These documents should be secured through separate planning conditions, should the application be approved.

##### Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

- 16.14.6 A statutory BNG assessment was completed using Natural England's latest metric. The baseline habitat value was calculated at 7.52 units, with an additional 0.28 hedgerow units. As a result, post development, the site will deliver; Habitat units: Net loss of 3.00 units (-39.86%) and Hedgerow units: Net gain of 1.16 units (+312.98%).
- 16.14.7 Information provided in the BNG statement and supported by the Metric calculation shows that the proposals qualify as significant on-site enhancement, in particular: enhancement of other neutral grassland from poor to moderate condition and creation of low distinctiveness native hedgerow. Accordingly, the proposal meets the criteria for significant on-site enhancement, namely:
- Enhancements to habitat condition
  - Creation of low distinctiveness habitats that generate a substantial number of biodiversity units relative to the site's pre-development value.
- 16.14.8 To secure these enhancements, long-term habitat management of the improved grassland and newly created hedgerows must be guaranteed for a minimum of 30 years via a Section 106 agreement and a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP).
- 16.14.9 While the scheme achieves a notable gain in hedgerow units, it does not meet the trading rules for medium distinctiveness habitats due to the loss of neutral grassland and urban trees. Consequently, off-site compensation is proposed through a financial contribution to a recognised habitat unit provider, to secure an additional 3.75 habitat units. This will ensure compliance with the statutory requirement for a minimum 10% net gain. The requirement for off-site units must also be secured via S106 agreement, with evidence of their purchase to be provided prior to commencement of development should the application be approved.
- 16.14.10 **With the above in mind the issue of impact on biodiversity is therefore attributed limited weight against the development.**

## **16.15 Impact on protected sites**

- 16.15.1 The proposed development site lies within Natural England's Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), where certain types of development may pose risks to terrestrial SSSIs and the Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), or Ramsar sites that they support.
- 16.15.2 The site is within the 13.8 km Zone of Influence (ZoI) for recreational impacts on The New Forest SAC, SPA, and Ramsar site. However, as the proposal does not involve residential development, Natural England has confirmed that the scheme is unlikely to result in significant adverse effects on nationally or internationally designated nature conservation sites or protected landscapes.
- 16.15.3 **With the above in mind the issue of impact on protected sites is therefore attributed no weight against the development.**

## **16.16 Land Contamination**

- 16.16.1 A report prepared by Earth Environmental and Geotechnical (Southern) Ltd, dated October 2023, was submitted in support of this application. The geo-environmental site

investigation was conducted at the proposed development site and comprised desk-based research, exploratory boreholes, trial pits, and laboratory testing to assess the potential for soil contamination and associated environmental risks.

- 16.16.2 The site has a documented history of mixed industrial use, including a former railway line and a vehicle repair workshop, both recognised as potential sources of contamination. Additionally, the presence of an electrical substation adjacent to the site boundary was noted, with a potential risk of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) contamination due to its age. PCBs are common contaminants associated with former railway land. Made Ground was encountered in various areas of the site, comprising materials such as brick, concrete, and asphalt, which may also contribute to contamination.
- 16.16.3 The preliminary risk assessment concluded that the overall risk to human health and controlled waters is moderate to low. The risk to construction workers was assessed as low, provided that appropriate health and safety measures are implemented, including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and adherence to site-specific health and safety plans. The risk to future site users, given the proposed commercial end use and anticipated hardstanding coverage, was also considered to be low.
- 16.16.4 The Council's land contamination consultants (WPA) have reviewed the findings of the investigation and raised concerns regarding land contamination, based on the aforementioned report. While the report generally indicates a low level of risk, it identifies hydrocarbon contamination at sampling locations WS2 and WS3, suggesting potential fuel leakage from storage facilities.
- 16.16.5 The report also notes that certain areas of the site may not be fully represented in the current dataset and highlights the potential presence of underground fuel storage tanks. Consequently, further investigation is required to determine the sources and extent of hydrocarbon contamination. As the application is recommended for refusal on Green Belt grounds, it is advised that any future approval be subject to a condition requiring additional ground investigations prior to the commencement of development.
- 16.16.6 In addition, a watching brief by a suitably qualified consultant should be maintained prior to the commencement of works, and standard contaminated land planning conditions should be applied to any planning permission granted.
- 16.16.7 **With the above in mind the issue of land contamination is therefore attributed no weight against the development.**

#### **16.17 Very Special Circumstances to justify development in the Green Belt**

- 16.17.1 As detailed in the report, very special circumstances will need to be demonstrated in order to justify development which is identified as causing harm to the openness of the Green Belt, both visually and spatially. In order to be acceptable, the very special circumstances must clearly outweigh the harm that is considered to be caused by the proposed development.
- 16.17.2 In each case, it will be for the decision-maker to form a planning judgment as to whether the harm to the Green Belt, by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm is clearly outweighed by countervailing factors such as to justify the grant of permission for

inappropriate development. The applicant has identified a number of factors which it considers to constitute very special circumstances, each of which is considered below.

16.17.3 As noted previously, the applicant has submitted a case for 'very special circumstances' (VSC) making the case that harm to the Green Belt is clearly outweighed by other circumstances as follows:

- 1. There is an economic need for deep discount groceries, given the cost of living crisis.*
- 2. The proposed store will not result in an adverse impact on any existing, committed or planned retail investment within any surrounding centres.*
- 3. The proposed store will reduce the necessity to travel further afield for discount groceries for local residents.*
- 4. No alternative sites available.*
- 5. The proposed site location would reduce traffic to wider supermarkets and thus be beneficial transport movement wise. It is also sustainably located so as to be accessed with ease via non-car transport methods.*
- 6. Job creation and economic benefits.*

16.17.4 Taking each circumstance in turn they are assessed in the planning balance as follows:

- 1. There is an economic need for deep discount groceries, given the cost of living crisis.*

The applicant argues that the ongoing cost of living crisis has created a significant demand for affordable food retail options, and that Aldi's discount model would offer economic relief to local residents.

While the importance of access to discount retail in the current economic climate is acknowledged, in this case, the need is already being met by the presence of other discount retailers, notably Lidl in Ferndown, located approximately 2.5 miles away. This distance typically compares to a travel time of around 5 to 10 minutes, subject to traffic conditions and the point of departure.

Moreover, although Aldi is the named applicant, any planning permission granted would fall under Use Class E(a). This classification permits occupation by any retailer within that use class, irrespective of the specific operational model or the typical restrictions on retail floorspace that are often applied to discount retailers via planning condition.

**Based on the above the matter of economic need for deep discount groceries attributes limited weight in favour of the development.**

- 2. The proposed store will not result in an adverse impact on any existing, committed or planned retail investment within any surrounding centres.*

The applicant states that the proposed store would not undermine existing or planned investment in nearby centres.

The Council's independent retail consultant (LSH) agrees that the proposal would result in some adverse impact but not in a significant adverse impact on town centre vitality or investment. However, the absence of significant harm does not, in itself, constitute a benefit capable of outweighing Green Belt harm.

**Based on the above the matter of impact on any existing, committed or planned retail investment does not contribute positively to the case for very special circumstances and attributes no weight in favour of the development.**

3. *The proposed store will reduce the necessity to travel further afield for discount groceries for local residents.*

The applicant suggests that the store would reduce travel distances for local residents currently travelling to other towns for discount groceries.

While the site is accessible and located on a prime transport corridor, the applicant has not demonstrated that existing travel patterns are unsustainable or that the proposal would result in a significant modal shift. The Retail Impact Assessment (RIA) confirms that the majority of trips to the proposed store would be diverted from existing stores, not newly generated. Furthermore, the site's location outside the settlement boundary and within the Green Belt undermines the sustainability credentials of the proposal.

**Based on the above, the sustainability benefits are marginal and not sufficient to outweigh Green Belt harm, therefore matter of reduced travel distances is attributed moderate weight in favour of the development.**

4. *No alternative sites available.*

A sequential site assessment submitted by the applicant has concluded that no suitable or available in-centre or edge-of-centre sites exist within the catchment area.

The Council's retail consultant agrees that no sequentially preferable sites are available for the proposed development. However, in the absence of a demonstrable need for additional retail floor space within the area, there is no requirement to identify or consider alternative sites.

**Based on the above, the lack of alternative sites availability is attributed no weight in favour of the development.**

5. *The proposed site location would reduce traffic to wider supermarkets and thus be beneficial transport movement wise. It is also sustainably located so as to be accessed with ease via non-car transport methods.*

The site is well connected by public transport and located on a prime transport corridor, which the applicant argues supports sustainable travel.

The site benefits from good accessibility and is adjacent to existing infrastructure. However, the proposal would result in a significant increase in car parking and associated vehicle movements. The development would also urbanise a currently open Green Belt site, undermining the environmental dimension of sustainability.

**The transport benefits are acknowledged but do not clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. Therefore, the factors of reduced traffic movement and sustainable travel is attributed moderate weight in favour of the development.**

6. *Job creation and economic benefits.*

As outlined earlier in this report, the proposed development is expected to generate between 40 and 50 new jobs, which equates to approximately 30 - 35 full-time equivalent (FTE) roles. This is in comparison to the 15–26 jobs currently supported by the existing industrial use. The applicant also refers to employment opportunities during the construction phase and a broader local economic uplift.

While the net increase in employment is a material consideration weighing in favour of the proposal, in this instance the uplift is relatively modest. Moreover, the loss of employment land is contrary to Policy PC2 of the Core Strategy. The applicant has not provided robust marketing evidence or a physical condition survey of the existing buildings to justify the case for the loss of employment use.

**Although job creation is acknowledged as a benefit, the weight attributed to this is reduced due to the unresolved policy conflict relating to the loss of employment land. Therefore, based on the above the matter of economic benefits is afforded limited weight in favour of the development.**

## **16.18 Planning Balance**

16.18.1 As previously discussed paragraph 153 of the NPPF states:

16.18.2 *When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.*

16.18.3 The following tables set out the planning considerations for and against the development and the weight that is being afforded to each consideration in the planning balance. Matters required to be secured by legal agreement (reptile translocation and highways improvements) are not included as these mitigate impacts of the development. In ascribing weight to the planning considerations in favour and against the following scale is used: **none, limited, moderate, significant and substantial.**

| Consideration in Favour                          | Weight   | Reason                                                                   |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Reduced Travel Distances for Local Residents     | Moderate | May reduce need to travel further afield for discount groceries          |
| Sustainable Location and Transport Accessibility | Moderate | Good public transport links and proximity to strategic road network      |
| Economic Benefits                                | Limited  | Creation of 30 – 35 full time jobs and temporary construction employment |
| Economic Need for Discount Groceries             | Limited  | Acknowledged in context of cost of living crisis, though                 |

|                                       |         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------------|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                       |         | existing provision already meets demand                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Compliance with Sequential Test       | Limited | Meets NPPF requirements, though not a benefit in itself                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Lack of Sequentially Preferable Sites | None    | No suitable or available in-centre or edge-of-centre sites identified<br><br>In the absence of a demonstrable need for additional retail floor space within the area, there is no requirement to identify or consider alternative sites |

| Considerations Against              | Weight      | Reason                                                                                                                                      |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Harm to the Green Belt              | Substantial | Inappropriate development causing visual and spatial harm to openness of the Green Belt;<br><br>Fails to meet NPPF exceptions               |
| Lack of Demonstrated Retail Need    | Substantial | No robust evidence provided to justify loss;<br><br>Contrary to Policy PC2                                                                  |
| Impact on the Character of the Area | Limited     | The initial impact assessed as Major/Moderate Adverse, the proposed planting scheme is expected to reduce this to Minor Adverse over time   |
| Loss of Employment Land             | Limited     | With sufficient marketing evidence and physical survey of the existing buildings provided, the loss of employment land could be acceptable. |
| Retail Impact on Local Centres      | Limited     | Retail Impact Assessment which has been independently assessed for                                                                          |

|                                      |         |                                                                                                                   |
|--------------------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                      |         | the Council concludes that the proposal is acceptable in this respect.                                            |
| Impact on Neighbouring Amenity       | Limited | Increased noise, light, and air pollution;<br>Inadequate acoustic screening, both can be mitigated by conditions  |
| Location Outside Settlement Boundary | Limited | Part of site lies outside defined settlement boundary however adjacent to it                                      |
| Trees and Landscaping                | Limited | Concerns over boundary treatments, tree/hedge species; Tree and RPA protection;<br>Can be mitigated by conditions |
| Highway Safety and Access            | Limited | Concerns over boundary treatments and glare can be mitigated by conditions                                        |
| Traffic Movement and Network Impact  | Limited | Impact on highways not considered severe                                                                          |
| Biodiversity and BNG                 | Limited | Impact on biodiversity is compensated                                                                             |
| Flood Risk and Drainage              | None    | Impact on floor risk considered acceptable;<br><br>Drainage strategy acceptable                                   |
| Land Contamination                   | None    | Hydrocarbon contamination identified; further investigation required, can be mitigated by conditions              |
| Impact on Protected Sites            | None    | No significant adverse effects identified;<br><br>Natural England raised no objections                            |

16.18.4 Again, the question of whether the development can be justified in the Green Belt having regard to existence of very special circumstances ultimately is a planning judgement for the decision maker.

16.18.5 The following table compares planning considerations in relation to the weight attributed to them.

| Weight             | Consideration AGAINST                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Consideration in FAVOUR                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Substantial</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Harm to the Green Belt</li> <li>- Lack of Demonstrated Retail Need</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- None identified</li> </ul>                                                                                              |
| <b>Significant</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- None identified</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- None identified</li> </ul>                                                                                              |
| <b>Moderate</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- None identified</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reduced Travel Distances for Local Residents</li> <li>- Sustainable Location and Transport Accessibility</li> </ul>     |
| <b>Limited</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Loss of Employment Land</li> <li>- Retail Impact on Local Centres</li> <li>- Impact on the Character of the Area</li> <li>- Impact on Neighbouring Amenity</li> <li>- Trees and landscaping</li> <li>- Location Outside Settlement Boundary</li> <li>- Highway Safety and Access</li> <li>- Traffic Movement and Network Impact</li> <li>- Biodiversity and BNG</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Economic Benefits</li> <li>- Economic Need for Discount Groceries</li> <li>- Compliance with Sequential Test</li> </ul> |
| <b>None</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Flood Risk and Drainage</li> <li>- Impact on Protected Sites</li> <li>- Land Contamination</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Impact on existing, committed or planned retail investment</li> <li>- Lack of Sequentially Preferable Sites</li> </ul>  |

16.18.6 Taking account of the above, regardless of the number of considerations in favour and against, the benefits must clearly outweigh the harm caused. Whilst there are a number of moderate benefits, there is also substantial harm identified, including harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriate development. Officers consider this harm and any other harm outweighs the benefits.

16.18.7 Therefore in accordance paragraph 153 of the NPPF very special circumstances do not exist and the development results in inappropriate development in the Green Belt and should be refused.

## 17. Conclusions

- 17.1 Taking account of all of the above, officers consider that, the application is not in accordance with the Development Plan as a whole and the NPPF. As a result of the overall harm to the Green Belt and the substantial weight attached to this, the lack of VSC's along with the other harms identified, including conflict with the settlement hierarchy and retail policies, loss of employment land without sufficient justification and adverse impact on landscape character and visual amenity, it is considered that the harm in this case is not clearly outweighed by the benefits outlined.
- 17.2 The officer recommendation is therefore for refusal for the reasons set out below.

## 18. Recommendation

The application to be **refused** for the following reasons:

1. The proposed development lies within the Green Belt within which no new development shall be permitted unless it meets one of the exceptions set out in the NPPF or there are 'very special circumstances'. The construction of a new food store and associated operational needs (parking, access, boundary fencing and retail paraphernalia) amounts to inappropriate development which is also harmful to the openness and visual amenities of this Green Belt area and the purposes of including the land within the Green Belt. The harm that would result is not clearly outweighed by other considerations, individually or cumulatively, and therefore very special circumstances do not exist. As such the proposals are considered contrary to the provisions of Section 13, paragraphs 153–155 of the NPPF (2024) and Policy KS3 of the Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy (2014).
2. The proposal would result in the loss of existing employment land without sufficient evidence to demonstrate a lack of market demand, contrary to Policy PC2 of the of the Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy (2014). No marketing evidence or physical survey of the existing buildings has been provided.

## Informatives

1. For clarity, the refused plans are as follows:

221016-1010 P03 Location Plan  
221016-1300 P06 Proposed Block Plan  
221016-1301 P03 Proposed Floor Plan  
221016-1302 P03 Proposed Roof Plan  
221016-1400 P02 Proposed Elevations  
221016-1401 P03 Proposed Sections  
0050 P01 Proposed Drainage Layout  
P7637-107-A Lighting Scheme  
15852\_P01 Tree Constraints Plan  
15852\_P02 Tree Retention & Removal Plan  
15852-P03 B Detailed soft landscape proposal sheet 1 of 2

15852-P03 B Detailed soft landscape proposal sheet 2 of 2

001 F Proposed access arrangements

002 C Swept path analysis 16.5m HGV entry/egress

003 C Swept path analysis large car

2. In the event of an appeal or any resubmission the applicant needs to be aware that the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) will be applied to this development.
3. In the event of a resubmission or an appeal, sufficient evidence to demonstrate a lack of market demand to justify loss of employment land including physical survey of the existing buildings would be required.
4. In accordance with paragraph 38 of the NPPF the council, as local planning authority, takes a positive approach to development proposals and is focused on providing sustainable development. The council works with applicants/agents in a positive and proactive manner by:
  - offering a formal pre-application advice service, and –
  - as appropriate updating applications/agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application and where possible suggesting solutions.

In this case:

- The applicant received pre-application advice advising the proposed development is unlikely to be supported.
- The applicant was advised that the proposal did not accord with the development plan and was given the opportunity to address concerns.
- The Council has worked with the applicant to reduce reasons for refusal.