

Hazel McCrady  
Planning Policy and Development  
PO Box 630  
Civic Centre  
Glebe Street  
Stoke-on-Trent  
ST4 1RF

School of Art  
Queen Street  
Burslem  
Stoke-on-Trent  
ST6 3EJ

9<sup>th</sup> August 2006

Your ref: PL/SOT/45782 (Hazel McCrady)  
Our ref: DR044/Mick Downs (t:01782 790595; e: mickdowns@uvns.org)

Dear Hazel

**RESERVED MATTERS APPLICATION  
FOOD STORE WITH CAR PARKING, PETROL FILLING STATION & LANDSCAPING  
CLOUGH STREET, HANLEY, STOKE-ON-TRENT**

I refer to your consultation letter of 26<sup>th</sup> July 2006 in which you asked Urban Vision's Design Review Panel to consider the above reserved matters application.

The Panel had not previously considered this scheme, and did not visit the site. The Panel did however have the benefit of an informal presentation from yourself and David Scott prior to commenting on the proposal. Unfortunately, the scheme is now at an advanced stage in the design process which invariably presents difficulties in dealing with any fundamental design issues.

The site in question is located inside the western boundary of Stoke-on-Trent City Centre and forms a gateway to the City Centre for persons approaching from the national highway network. The Panel were advised that both the position of the proposed Potteries Way extension and the siting of the building had been fixed through an outline planning permission granted by the Secretary of State following call-in of the planning application.

The Panel had several concerns about the proposal, stemming primarily from its failure to take the opportunities available to this City Centre gateway site, due largely to the building's poor siting and disjointed relationship to the network of adjoining streets and pedestrian routes.

Clough Street runs through the site on an east-west axis and is an historic link through the site from the residential area of Etruria to the west to the City Centre in the east. The panel thought this should have been respected by retaining a pedestrian link along this route across the site and relating new buildings to this. Inexplicably the store is set back and is not aligned to form a proper frontages to either the historic line of Clough Street or to the proposed new bypass extension, despite the fact that it would be very easy to do so. The service yard occupies a prominent position between the side of the building and the proposed extension to the Potteries Way. A

large area of car parking is also located on the Etruria Road frontage. The Panel were informed that the area intent is for this to become a Business Boulevard linking Festival Park with the City Centre. In this context a commercial frontage element to Etruria Road would be much preferable to exposed surface parking.

Overall the Panel thought that the layout and character of the proposed development has been designed for the convenience of motor vehicles with only very limited consideration given to mesh the development into the streets or pedestrian network of the City Centre.

The elevations to the building are similar to other recent Tesco superstores, having simple clean lines with full glazing to a canopied main elevation and smooth white cladding elsewhere; additional glazing has been provided along the side elevations at high level. The store is accessed at each end of the main (car park) frontage. Pedestrian access is available from the City Centre via Clough Street east, Etruria Road north and off Broad Street to the south west.

The Panel considered the building a clean, functional, simple large box. This avoids the generally unsuccessful 'pastiche' efforts by some supermarket development to mimic local styles with 'bolt-on tradition' but lacks any attempt whatsoever to respond to the locality or to offer any identity other than a corporate company statement.

This building could be anywhere in the UK and as such it will not make a positive contribution to the townscape of the City Centre. Sites within easy walking distance of the heart of any UK City centre should be seen as valuable places for intensive, characterful, multi-storey urban building, not for single storey boxes in a sea of surface parking. The site is within the City Centre and the Panel asked why a single storey development is being proposed in such a central location. A more intensive urban scheme would be far more appropriate. This need not preclude the foodstore but could include residential and commercial uses above and adjoining it. Multi storey car parking, screened behind frontage buildings could have allowed other parts of the site, such as the Etruria Road frontage, to be made available for future development.

The unsatisfactory siting of the building not only results in poor linkages with the existing street network but also causes several other significant urban design problems. By setting the building close to the backs of existing properties on Broad Street, the opportunity to locate the service yard in a far less prominent position at the rear of the building is lost. The 120m main frontage of the site onto the proposed new bypass extension would comprise a petrol filling station, site access road, and heavy goods vehicle service yard partially screened by a 2m brick wall. This will be an uncomfortable environment for pedestrians, and will create an extremely unattractive first impression of Stoke-on-Trent City Centre for visitors approaching along the principal road access into the City Centre from the national highway network.

A pedestrian connection is proposed linking the site with Broad Street and, whilst efforts have been made to make this route safe and attractive to people on foot, the Panel considered that this would be a blank-sided pathway that would offer little interest to shoppers or visitors. The Panel also thought that the small archway proposed for the frontage to Broad Street is very weak and out of proportion to the wide and poorly gap in the street frontage being created around it. There could be a commercial advantage in adding some gateway building or other significant architectural marker of the way in to the development giving a much more substantial streetscene presence onto Broad Street.

Overall the Panel felt that this proposal would be a retrograde step in the drive to create a new quality image for Stoke-on-Trent. The dominance of the site by motor vehicles, poor integration with the surrounding streets, the intrusive siting of the service yard, poor pedestrian linkages, extensive areas of inactive building and site frontages, and the lack of any sense of place-making

in the design and layout of the development all combine to make this a very disappointing proposal in the context of the City Council's aspirations for transformational change.

The Panel were told that the new extension to the Potteries Way would be built from a Section 106 contribution paid by the applicant and linked to a planning permission for the proposal. The Panel were disappointed that so much priority had been given to the construction of the bypass road and insufficient importance had been given to the quality of the environment being created. They noted that the road proposed shares many characteristics with inner ring roads as built in other cities in the 60's and 70's and which have often been since changed to more inviting 'boulevard' streets where possible. They considered that at the very least a structured approach to landscaping might be introduced even at this late stage, so as to provide a more coherent tree lined avenue.

The Panel recommend that any possibilities for repositioned the building should be explored before any planning permission is granted, as at present the proposal fails to satisfy the requirements of PPS1 that developments must be designed so as to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions (paragraph 34).

I hope that these comments will be helpful. If you need any further clarification, please get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Manager  
Urban Vision North Staffordshire

cc. Sebastian Tibenham, Development Planning Partnership