

Design & Access Statement – Central Stores, 141-141a Central Avenue, Gravesend, DA12 5BH. Re: Variation of a planning condition application GB/88/1154 – Trading hour restrictions.

Application Background:

This is a well-established convenience store operated by various lease holders for some 19 years. Prior to my client's landlord acquiring the business in 2020 the premises generally traded the hours they do today as detailed below:

Monday to Thursday	06.00 to 22.00 hours
Friday	06.00 to 23.00 hours
Saturday	07.00 to 23.00 hours
Sunday	07.00 to 22.00 hours

The existing customers complain they are unsure what the starting and terminal trading hours of the store are as they tend to vary day to day.

This position has existed for many years and probably commenced from around June of 2005 when the Gravesham Magistrates first granted a licence to sell alcohol for consumption off the premises to these premises. In those days all licenses were granted the same hours (unlike when the Licensing Act 2003 came into force in November 2005).

The hours granted were as follows:

Monday to Saturday	08.00 to 23.00 hours
Sunday	10.00 to 22.30 hours
Good Friday	08.00 to 22.30 hours
Xmas day	12.00 to 15.00 & 19.00 to 22.30 hours.

The current applicant wishes to regularise the shops trading hours especially as he is in the process of amending his premises licence to 06.00 hours until 23.00 hours and it was because of this application that planning (in its capacity as a responsible authority) in the licensing consultation process identified a trading hour restriction condition from a 1988 change of use planning application. This planning condition was not brought to the attention of retail leaseholders since around 2005.

In the 1988 planning decision letter relating to a change of use application – it was noted that within the planning officer's comments the following:

Firstly, from an earlier change of use application in 1985 in an appeal to HM inspectorate – this following extract was identified as particularly pertinent:-

"It is clear from the representations that any non-residential use of no's 139-143 will result in an attraction of vehicles to the premises. Those vehicles may belong to visitors of the shops or offices, delivery and service vehicles, or vehicles belonging to occupants of the premises. However, such vehicles will tend to stay only a short time or to be present during the hours of business. It is also inevitable that such vehicles will park outside adjoining houses at certain times of day in the absence of parking restrictions in the area."

In 1986 in another change of use application the planning officer was supportive of the application against the objections of the borough technical officer regarding inappropriate levels of calling vehicles:-

"I am of the opinion that the use is acceptable in this locality, which has become an established commercial centre. The main cause of concern is whether the use as proposed would be likely to generate unacceptable levels of vehicular movements. In the light of the inspectors' comments outlined above, and the fact that the

use is a class A1 shop, I am of the opinion that the use will not incur any detrimental impact on adjoining neighbours and is acceptable in highways terms."

Our investigations have suggested that in the last 5 years no complaints have been received by the current leaseholder regarding any noise nuisance complaint or indeed any complaint at all against these premises.

An analysis was undertaken from the premises electronic till regarding customer numbers for the period 1st October to 31st October 2024 inclusive. It revealed that after 10pm and before 9am, a total of 1715 customer visits were made to the store at these times – this represented 14.1% of all customer visits clearly demonstrating a demand for this amenity.

Since the imposition of this trading hours condition some 36 years ago – trading patterns and lifestyles have changed dramatically as has the needs and expectations of customers due to late or early work patterns which in part have driven these changes. It is now the norm especially for convenience stores to operate the hours requested. Indeed, the incentive to reduce longer drive times to the larger supermarkets is more and more prevalent especially in trying to reduce greenhouse gas generation.

There are no single or double yellow lines in the vicinity of the premises except around speed bumps.

The location is largely residential in nature although the shop that now trades under the name Central Stores is well established and has been a convenience store for nearly 20 years and for other retail use prior to a term as offices in the 1980/90's. There have been commercial premises for many years prior to its current use as the 1988 planning officers report attests.

The shop location is not within a conservation area nor is it considered to be a green space area, nor are there any areas within a reasonable distance that Biodiversity may be considered under threat.

Recent Planning History refers to the half of the current premises referred to as 141b Central Avenue

- GR/79/958 - Continued use as an office – Refused 13.3.85.
- 19860462 - Change of use of drawing office to consulting rooms for a Chiropodist and Osteopath – Granted 21.7.86.
- 19881154 – Change of use chiropodist Osteopath surgery to shop – Granted 7.3.89.
- 19900384 – Installation of new shopfront – Granted 7.7.90.
- 19980132 – Change of use of shop to a hot food takeaway – Refused 27.4.98.
- 20081089 – Conversion of ground floor from A1 retail to a self-contained one bedroomed flat and external alterations – Granted 11.9.09.

Central Store



End