



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report ABP-304541-19

Development

The expansion and associated reconfiguration of the existing Skibbereen Lidl Store car park by removing 15 no. car parking spaces and providing 63 no. new car parking spaces, the provision of a new pedestrian access and vehicular exit only onto Townsend Street, boundary treatments, hard and soft landscaping, services and all ancillary and associated site development works

Location

Baltimore Road & Townsend Street, Skibbereen, Co. Cork.

Planning Authority

Cork County Council

Planning Authority Reg. Ref.

18/591

Applicant(s)

Lidl Ireland GmbH

Type of Application

Permission

Planning Authority Decision

Refusal

Type of Appeal

First Party -v- Decision

Appellant(s)	Lidl Ireland GmbH
Observer(s)	Fachtna & Jacinta Hamilton
Date of Site Inspection	16 th August 2019
Inspector	Hugh D. Morrison

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1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The site is located at the southern tip of Skibbereen town centre. This site is situated on the western side of the Four Crosses Roundabout, which forms the junction between Townsend Street (R596), Market Street (R595), and Baltimore Road (R595). It lies in an area of mixed uses, with shops and services to the east, dwelling houses to the north west and the existing Lidl foodstore to the south west. Dwelling houses also predominate beyond this foodstore, including the observers' dwelling house which is adjacent to its south western boundary.
- 1.2. The west north western boundary of the site abuts the Assolas Stream, which flows to the north to join a tributary of the River Ilen. This Stream has been the subject of recent flood relief works and so, as it passes the site, the stream flows through a walled-in channel. Within the site, the nearside wall is accompanied by an embankment.
- 1.3. The site itself extends over an area of 0.2666 hectares and it is bound by the aforementioned Roundabout, to the south east, and Townsend Street, to the north east. To the north west, this site abuts the aforementioned Stream and to the south west it abuts the site of the existing Lidl foodstore. The site is a "greenfield site", which is presently unused and vacant. Its boundaries are denoted by stone walls and an agricultural gate affords access off Townsend Street.

2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1. The proposal would entail the construction of an extension to the existing Lidl foodstore car park and an accompanying egress onto Townsend Street.
- 2.2. Specifically, this proposal would entail the removal of 15 no. existing car parking spaces, which are laid out to the north north east of the food store and so adjacent to the south south western boundary of the site. The extension itself would result in the provision of 63 no. new car parking spaces and thus an overall net increase of 48 no. car parking spaces.
- 2.3. The accompanying egress would provide an exit to the car park directly onto Townsend Street and it would be accompanied by a pedestrian footpath on its east south eastern side.

- 2.4. Surface water drainage arrangements for new car park would entail the construction of a below ground attenuation tank, which would be accompanied by a petrol interceptor and a flow control. These arrangements would discharge to the Assolas Stream.
- 2.5. Boundary treatments would include, to the north west, the construction of a reinforced concrete retaining wall with 1.8m high paladin fence fixed on top of it. This wall would be constructed along with access steps to the stream bed and it would be accompanied by soft landscaping.

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1. Decision

Permission was refused for the following reason:

The site is located within the development boundary of Skibbereen Town as defined in the current Skibbereen Town Development Plan, 2009. The associated Land Use Zoning Map (Map 3) provides for an “indicative route of future distributor road” through the subject site. It has not been demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority that the proposed development would not adversely impact upon the future delivery of this distributor road. The proposed development would, therefore, be premature pending the determination by the Planning Authority of a road layout for this area and would also materially contravene an objective indicated in the Land Use Zoning Map of the current Skibbereen Town Development Plan. As such, the proposal would be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

3.2. Planning Authority Reports

3.2.1. Planning Reports

Further information was sought with respect to the following matters:

- The redesign of the proposed exit to minimise the risk of it being used as an entrance. Accompanying sightlines to be shown, too.
- The riparian strip beside the Assolas Stream to be addressed and an invasive species survey to be carried out.

- As the site lies within Flood Zone A, a Flood Risk Assessment to be undertaken.
- Indicative route of relief road highlighted: Applicant is to submit documentation and give an explicit undertaking that the proposal would not negatively impact upon this route.
- Residential amenity concerns to be addressed with respect to opening hours and the installation of a barrier at the proposed exit.

3.2.2. Other Technical Reports

- IFI: If adjoining stream affected, then prior approval required.
- Irish Water: No objection, standard observations.

Cork County Council

- Estates: Following receipt of further information, no objection.
- Environment (Waste): No objection, subject to a condition.
- Coastal Management & Flood Projects: Advises that the proposed flood wall would meet the design standards of the Skibbereen Flood Relief Scheme, i.e. 0.5% AEP + freeboard.
- Ecologist: Following receipt of further information, no objection, subject to conditions.
- Engineering: Following receipt of further information, no objection, subject to conditions.

4.0 Planning and Flood Relief Works Histories

Site:

- PPW 17/622: Table 3.9 of the draft West Cork Municipal District Local Area Plan 2017, entitled “Transport Improvement Measures”, included the following under Item 6:

Provide link road from Four Crosses roundabout to Rossa Road to reduce traffic flow on Main Street and Townsend Street.

The rationale for these Measures was stated as being: “In order to address the issue of congestion in the town, promote a more pedestrian orientated town centre and develop the town as a cycling hub, this Plan recognises the importance of implementing the...Measures identified in the Traffic and Transportation Study.

The then landowner of the subject site requested that Item 6 be omitted.

Ultimately the LAP was recast as referring to only the environs of Skibbereen and so Table 3.9 was omitted in favour of Objective No. SK-GO-04, which states “Support the implementation of the Traffic and Transportation Strategy for Skibbereen.”

As an amendment to the draft LAP, the landowner of the subject site requested that Objective No. SK-GO-04 be omitted. In its adoption of the LAP, the Planning Authority did not omit or change this amendment.¹

- Construction of an embankment proposed as part of the River Ilen (Skibbereen) Drainage Scheme: Permitted and recently implemented.
- Replacement of the aforementioned embankment by the currently proposed flood wall is the subject of a Section 9 application to the OPW, under the Arterial Drainage (Amendment) Act 1995.

Adjoining Lidl site:

- 03/03: Licenced discount food store: Permitted at appeal PL76.204531, subject to 13 conditions including the following one:

2.(1) The proposed development shall be amended as follows:

(d) provision shall be made to relocate the vehicular entrance to the site from the new road proposed on the northern boundary and when this entrance is commissioned the entrance on the Baltimore Road shall be closed and a roadside boundary constructed to match the existing boundary,

Reason: In the interest of orderly development and to safeguard the amenities of adjacent dwellings.

¹ Page 22 of the Chief Executive’s Opinion and Recommendations on the Issues Raised by Submissions on the Proposed Amendments, 16th June 2017.

A further three conditions required the payment of contributions towards expenditure incurred by the Planning Authority on works that would facilitate the development. These contributions included €100,000 towards “road facilities”. A 7-year “specified period” from the date of the Order, 13th February 2004, was cited within which any payment would be refunded in the absence of the said works.

Following the implementation of the aforementioned parent permission, several minor applications were made, including the following one:

- 13/57018: Provision of dedicated pedestrian/cycle entrance from Baltimore Road and reconfiguration of the car park (111 no. spaces): Permitted.

5.0 Policy and Context

5.1. Development Plan

Under Map 3 of the Skibbereen Town Development Plan 2009 (TDP), the site and the adjoining Lidl site are shown as being zoned for mixed use. The indicative route of a future distributor road is shown as passing through the southern portion of the site, too. (This Road would run between the Four Crosses Roundabout adjacent to the site and Rossa Road to the west of the town centre). The site is also shown as lying within a landmark site centred on the adjacent roundabout.

5.2. Natural Heritage Designations

- Lough Hyne Nature Reserve and Environs SAC (site code 000097)
- Sheep’s Head to Toe Head SPA (site code 004156)
- Roaring Water Bay and Islands SCA (site code 000101)

5.3. EIA Screening

Under Items 10(b)(ii) of Part 2 of Schedule 5 to Article 93 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 – 2019, where more than 400-space car parks would be constructed, the need for a mandatory EIA arises. The proposal is for the development of a 63-space car park. Accordingly, it does not attract the need for a

mandatory EIA. Furthermore, as this proposal would fall below the relevant threshold, I conclude that, based on its nature, size, and location, there is no real likelihood of significant effects upon the environment and so the preparation of an EIAR is not required.

6.0 The Appeal

6.1. Grounds of Appeal

The applicant begins by reviewing the application stage of the current proposal. This proposal would comply with the mixed-use zoning of the site and it would be welcome from a traffic management perspective. The only issue is that of the indicative route of a relief road. In this respect, attention is drawn to Section 5.7 of the Development Management Guidelines, which advise against seeking further information where there is an in-principle objection to a proposal, and disquiet is expressed at the absence of written documentation pertaining to a pivotal conversation between the senior executive planner and an executive engineer concerning the said indicative route.

The following grounds of appeal are cited:

- The proposal would be an ancillary one to the existing Lidl food store. As an extension to the store's existing car park, it would comply with the mixed-use zoning of the site and Policy T4-1(a) of the TDP, which encourages "improvements to existing off-street parking within the defined town centre and mixed-use zoning area."

The site is also the subject of an identified "indicative route of future distributor road". In failing to progress this route to the design stage, the Planning Authority has not fulfilled its general duty, under Section 15 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 – 2019, to "take such steps within its powers as may be necessary for securing the objectives of the development plan."

- The nature and modest scale of the proposal would not inhibit any future implementation of the relief road, i.e. the site's boundaries would be unaffected and the works in question would simply entail the provision of a car park with an accompanying exit and a flood defence wall in lieu of an

embankment. In particular, the said wall would be of benefit to any subsequent road construction insofar as it would protect the site from flooding and it could be incorporated into the new road itself. Likewise, the surface car park would not entail any appreciable change in existing levels and the mere provision of a hard surface would not inhibit/preclude the provision of a road.

- The construction of the road in question has manifestly not been a priority for Cork County Council. Thus, this road is in the TDP, which was adopted in 2009, and yet it has not proceeded to the design stage. It is simply an indicative route on Map 3 of the TDP with no accompanying commentary in the written statement. Its low profile is illustrated by the absence of any reference to it at the pre-application consultation stage and by the absence of any commentary upon it from Cork County Council's Roads Directorate.

Furthermore, the zoning map of Skibbereen published as part of the draft West Cork Municipal District LAP on 16th November 2016 omitted the indicative route altogether, thus suggesting that the Council does not intend to proceed with the same.

- The Planning Authority's reason for refusal refers to the proposal as being "premature pending the determination by the Planning Authority of a road layout for this area." And yet this proposal would accord with the zoning of the site and the character of the area. Effectively, the applicant is being "put on hold" until such times as the Planning Authority either designs this road or omits it as an objective from the TDP or its successor.

The practical effect of the Planning Authority's refusal is to ensure that the land remains unused. In this respect, legal cases have established that "existing development rights" are a material planning consideration, i.e. decision makers need to weigh what may be done if a site is refused planning permission.

6.2. Planning Authority Response

None

6.3. Observations

Fachtna & Jacinta Hamilton of “Suaimhneas”, Baltimore Road, Skibbereen

The observers reside to the south west of the applicant’s existing food store in Skibbereen. They raise the following concerns:

- Attention is drawn to condition 2(h) of the parent permission for the Lidl food store: This condition requires that a proprietary barrier be installed.
- Attention is also drawn to condition 3, which sets out the relevant hours of operation.
- Although a barrier was belatedly installed, instances of the hours of operation being breached and the car park being left open have persisted, with adverse effects upon residential amenity.

The applicant’s reassurances about the effective management of the site need to be seen in the light of this track record.

6.4. Further Responses

None

7.0 Assessment

7.1. I have reviewed the proposal in the light of the national planning guidelines, the CDP, the LAP, the TDP, relevant planning history, the submissions of the parties and the observers, and my own site visit. Accordingly, I consider that this application/ appeal should be assessed under the following headings:

- (i) Indicative Route
- (ii) Land use, landmark status, and parking standards,
- (ii) Traffic, access/egress, and parking layout,
- (iii) Amenity,
- (iv) Water, and
- (v) Screening for AA.

(i) Indicative Route

- 7.2. Under Map 3 of the TDP, the site is shown as lying within the indicative route of a future distributor road, which would connect, by means of a new road, the Four Crosses Roundabout to Rossa Road to the north west of the site.
- 7.3. The objective to construct the said new road existed when the parent application 03/03 was made. Thus, the layout of this road was shown on the submitted site layout plan (drawing no. 783-03 revision no. C) as abutting the north north eastern boundary to what is now the operative Lidl foodstore site. The subsequent permission, granted at appeal PL76.204531, was conditional on the transfer of the site access from Baltimore Road to the new road, once it was constructed, and on the payment of a special contribution towards the cost of this road.
- 7.4. If the aforementioned layout is projected onto the current site, then the south western portion of this site would be required for the new road and so the remainder of the site would be physically severed from the existing operative Lidl foodstore.
- 7.5. The Planning Authority refused the current proposal on the basis that the applicant had failed to demonstrate that it would not adversely impact upon the future delivery of the proposed distributor road and on the basis that it would be premature in advance of a road layout for the area.
- 7.6. The applicant has appealed the Planning Authority's decision on the following grounds:
- The objective is of longstanding and low priority and the Planning Authority has failed to progress its realisation, and
 - The proposal itself would, as a surface car park which incorporates within it flood defence measures, be compatible with any future new road construction.
- 7.7. In relation to the first of these grounds, the objective does indeed appear to have existed for a considerable length of time. Nevertheless, its continuing importance for the future traffic management of the town centre was acknowledged in the early stages of the preparation of the West Cork Municipal District Local Area Plan. Thus, in Figure 3.3.4 of a Preliminary Consultation Document dated 14th December 2015, the indicative route of the proposed new road was shown, under the heading of Skibbereen Movement Strategy. Likewise, under Table 3.9 of the subsequent draft

LAP, Transport Improvement Measures were listed including the following one, which was denoted as Item 6: "Provide link road from Four Crosses Roundabout to Rossa Road to reduce traffic on Main Street and Townsend Street." The then landowner of the subject site contested this Item. While Table 3.9 was omitted from the amended LAP, this was prompted by the exclusion of the administrative area of the former Skibbereen Town Council from its ambit. It was replaced by Objective No. SK-GO-04, which states: "Support the implementation of the Traffic and Transportation Strategy for Skibbereen." (This Strategy seeks to create a pedestrian/cycle friendly town centre², an outcome that would hinge on traffic management measures such as the proposed distributor road). This Objective, too, was contested by the then landowner of the site and yet it was retained in the adopted LAP. I am therefore satisfied that, notwithstanding the longevity of the distributor road as a proposal, it remains one that is directly and indirectly the subject of the adopted TDP and LAP, respectively, and of critical importance to the Planning Authority's vision for the town centre.

- 7.8. In relation to the second of these grounds, the applicant contends that the proposed surface car park would be compatible with the new road. I consider that, insofar as the current proposal would not entail any new buildings, it would not present a scenario wherein demolition and site clearance would feature. Nevertheless, in advance of a detailed design of the new road, such compatibility is not self-evident, especially as the site has been the subject of recent flood defence measures that would be reworked under the proposal. The applicant expresses confidence that these reworked measures would evidence such compatibility, but again in the absence of a detailed design this is not possible to confirm. Beyond such engineering questions, the utility of any retained site for use as a customer car park has not been addressed by the applicant. Given the inevitability of this site being severed from the currently operational site, such utility is far from self-evident. Furthermore, such usage would raise issues in terms of vehicular and pedestrian movements across the new road and the implications of such for road safety and traffic management, which could only be realistically addressed in the light of a detailed design of the new road.

² Paragraph 3.4.31 of the adopted West Cork Municipal District Local Area Plan 2017.

7.9. In the light of the foregoing discussion, I conclude that the indicative route reservation across the site needs to be respected and so, in advance of a detailed design for the new road, the proposal is premature.

(ii) Land use, landmark status, and parking standards

7.10. Under the TDP, the site is zoned mixed use. The proposal is for the extension of the existing car park, which serves the adjacent Lidl food store (net retail floorspace of 1250 sqm) that is subject to the same zoning. As such, this proposal would be ancillary to this established retail use. Table 3.1 of the TDP sets out a land use zoning matrix, which shows supermarkets with greater than 200 sqm of floorspace as being “open for consideration”. An accompanying note states that support for such uses is “dependant on site characteristics, neighbouring uses and compliance with other criteria detailed in the Plan.”

7.11. Under Map 3 and Paragraph 12.2.4 of the TDP, “Lands and existing development centred around the Baltimore Road Roundabout”³ is identified as a key landmark site. Traffic approaching Skibbereen town centre along Baltimore Road and along the R596 from Castletownsend, typically, enters the town centre along Townsend Road and so it passes the subject site. Accordingly, this site functions as a gateway site to the southern tip of the town centre. Its proposed development to provide a surface car park for the existing Lidl foodstore would thus be a sub-optimal outcome, from urban design and townscape perspectives, for such an important site.

7.12. Under the TDP’s car parking standards, each 100 sqm of gross retail floorspace should be accompanied by a minimum of 6 car parking spaces. The existing Lidl food store has a gross floorspace of 1692 sqm and so under these standards it should have 98 car parking spaces. It has 96 such spaces.

7.13. Under the CDP’s car parking standards, each 20 sqm of gross retail floorspace should be accompanied by a maximum of 5 car parking spaces and so under these standards, no more than 82 car parking spaces should serve the said foodstore.

7.14. The latter standards are more recent, and they reflect the current practice of citing maximum rather than minimum car parking standards. Thus, under these standards, the existing car park represents an over-provision of 14 car parking spaces and so

³ This Roundabout is also known as the Four Crosses Roundabout.

prima facie there is no justification under the same for the proposed extension to this car park, which would result in a net addition of 48 car parking spaces.

7.15. Under Section 3.3 of the applicant's cover letter to the current application, it refers to the prospect that the proposed car parking spaces would be "available for use by people who wish to access the existing town centre, thereby contributing to reduced parking congestion within the town." (The case planner's report comments only on the potential of the proposal to ease congestion on the applicant's overall site at peak times and during the busy summer months). I consider that it would only be acceptable to entertain the applicant's case based on (a) an assessment of the adequacy or otherwise of town centre wide car parking provision, and (b), in the event that provision for the public was deemed to fall short and the site would be a suitable location for making good on the same, a legally binding mechanism to ensure that the applicant did, on an on-going basis, provide car parking spaces that would be available to the wider public.

7.16. I conclude that the proposal would represent a sub-optimal development for the landmark status of the site, and it would lead to an overprovision of car parking spaces for the Lidl foodstore. Consequently, as a use of land ancillary to an existing retail use, which under the mixed-use zoning of the site is "open for consideration", it would not meet the pre-conditions for an appropriate use in this zone.

(ii) Traffic, access/egress, and parking layout

7.17. As an extension to the applicant's existing customer car park, the proposal is intended to ensure that there is adequate car parking provision for customers during peak times and the busier summer months. As such, it would be unlikely to generate significant additional traffic, i.e. it may, on the one hand, reduce traffic movements previously generated by the unsuccessful search for a car parking space, and, on the other hand, it may increase traffic movements generated by the "supply side effect" of the greater availability of car parking spaces at this particular foodstore.

7.18. Vehicular access to the proposed car park extension would be via the existing car park only. Vehicular egress would be either by means of the existing combined entrance/exit on Baltimore Road or by means of a new exit only onto Townsend Street. Under further information, the design of the new exit was modified to militate still further against its possible use as a vehicular entrance from this Street. (As

Townsend Street is a one-way street with traffic flowing in a northerly direction only, the risk of its use as an entrance would only arise from left hand turning manoeuvres). This exit would be capable of being accompanied by the requisite sightlines.

- 7.19. Pedestrian access through the proposed car park extension would be facilitated by a footpath that would accompany the south eastern side of the exit road and which would run through the centre of this extension to the vicinity of the foodstore. Such access would be facilitated further by a pedestrian crossing to this foodstore itself. Such a crossing may require the layout of 3 mobility impaired spaces, adjacent to the entrance to the foodstore, to be re-sited slightly.
- 7.20. The layout of the proposed 63 spaces would generally be satisfactory. At the level of detail each space should be 2.4m wide and 4.9m deep. Under CDP car parking standards provision should be made for mobility impaired (5%) and parent and child customers (10%). The existing car park provides 3 of the former spaces and 6 of the latter spaces. As the overall car park would have 144 spaces, a total of 8 mobility spaces, i.e. an extra 5, and 15 parent and child spaces should be provided, i.e. an extra 9. The said standards also require the provision of spaces for motorbikes at a rate of 1 per 10 car parking spaces, i.e. 15. Cycle standards also fall to be complied with at a minimum rate of 1 per 250 sqm of gross floorspace. As the foodstore has a gross floorspace of 1692 sqm, 7 cycle stands are required.
- 7.21. I conclude that the traffic generated by the proposal would be unlikely to be significant, the design of the proposed exit would be satisfactory, and, subject to some modifications, the layout of the car park would be satisfactory. These modifications may entail modifications to the existing car park, too. However, as it is under the applicant's control, too, they could both be conditioned.

(iii) Amenity

- 7.22. The observers reside to the south west of the applicant's operational foodstore site. They raise a cluster of concerns pertaining to the hours to which this site operates and the use of a barrier at the existing combined entrance and exit on Baltimore Road. They also express concern over the future management of the enlarged operational site.

- 7.23. I note that under condition 2(h) attached to the parent permission (03/03 and PL76.204531), "A proprietary barrier shall be provided and locked outside of operating hours." The accompanying reason stated, "To safeguard the amenities of adjacent dwellings." Thus, concerns over operating hours and the use of this barrier can be the subject of planning enforcement, as appropriate.
- 7.24. I note, too, that the exit to the proposed car park extension would be gated and so, in the event that the Board is minded to grant permission, this gate could be similarly conditioned to that of the existing proprietary barrier.
- 7.25. I conclude that the proposal would be compatible with the amenities of the area.

(iv) Water

- 7.26. The proposal is for the construction of a surface car park on a "greenfield site" beside the Assolas Stream, which has been the subject of recent flood relief works undertaken by the OPW.
- 7.27. The proposed car park would be served by means of a surface water drainage scheme, which would incorporate a below ground attenuation tank with an accompanying petrol interceptor and a flow control device. This tank would be sized to handle a 1 in 100-year rainfall event plus 30% for climate change and this flow control device would maintain the discharge of water to the Assolas Stream at the pre-development greenfield run-off rate.
- 7.28. To maximise the extent of the proposed car park, the embankment formed within the site as a flood defence measure would be replaced by a reinforced concrete wall with a wire mesh fence on top of it. These measures would replicate the defence against fluvial flooding from the Assolas Stream that the embankment presently affords.
- 7.29. Under further information, the applicant submitted a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA), which acknowledges that the site lies in Zone A. However, as the proposal is for a water compatible use, no sequential test is necessary. The aforementioned flood defence measures mitigate/would mitigate the risk of flooding to a satisfactory degree. The FRA recommended that the design of the proposed wall be modified to allow it to be adapted in the future in accordance with the possible further need to mitigate against the impact of climate change. The applicant has duly modified this design.

7.30. The proposed surface water drainage scheme and flood risk mitigation measures would be satisfactory.

(v) Screening for AA

7.31. The site is neither in nor near to a Natura 2000 site. The nearest such sites are as follows:

- Lough Hyne Nature Reserve and Environs SAC (site code 000097),
- Sheep's Head to Toe Head SPA (site code 004156), and
- Roaring Water Bay and Islands SCA (site code 000101).

The applicant has submitted a Screening Exercise from which I have drawn in my own screening exercise below.

7.32. I am not aware of any source/pathway/receptor route between the site and the first of these Natura 2000 sites. Such a route does exist between this site and the second two Natura 2000 sites, via the Assolas Stream and the Ilen River Network. However, given the separation distance of c. 14 km between the site and these sites, and given, too, the limited nature of the construction works and the design of the proposed surface water drainage scheme, the risk of pollution is slight and so I do not consider that the proposal, during either its construction or operational phases, would be likely to significantly effect the Conservation Objectives of these sites.

7.33. It is reasonable to conclude that, on the basis of the information on the file, which I consider adequate in order to issue a screening determination, that the proposal, individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not be likely to have a significant effect on European Sites Nos. 000097, 004156, and 000101, or any other European site, in view of the sites' Conservation Objectives, and a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (and submission of a NIS) is not therefore required.

8.0 Recommendation

8.1. That permission be refused.

9.0 Reasons and Considerations

1. Having regard to Map 3 of the Skibbereen Town Development Plan 2009 – 2015 and to Objective SK-GO-04 of the West Cork Municipal District Local Area Plan 2017, the site is the subject of an indicative route of a future distributor road, which is also the subject of a Traffic and Transportation Strategy for Skibbereen. In advance of a detailed design of this route, which would entail the construction of a new road across the subject site, the proposed car park extension would be premature, as it would either serve to prejudice such a design exercise or itself be prejudiced by such an exercise. Accordingly, the proposal would materially contravene the Town Development and Local Area Plans and so be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
2. Having regard to Map 3 and Paragraph 12.2.4 of the Skibbereen Town Development Plan 2009 – 2015, the site is zoned mixed use and it is identified as lying within a landmark site centred around the Baltimore Road Roundabout. The proposal is for an extension to an existing food store customer car park and so, as an ancillary use to this food store, it is a retail use. Under the mixed-use zoning, retail uses are “open for consideration” subject to “on site characteristics, neighbouring uses and compliance with other criteria detailed in the Plan.”

The proposal is for a surface car park, a development that would represent a sub-optimal one from urban design and townscape perspectives for a site that enjoys a landmark status in the Town Development Plan. Furthermore, this car park would, under the Car Parking Standards set out in the Cork County Development Plan 2014 – 2020, lead to the over-provision of car parking spaces serving the adjacent food store.

Accordingly, as the proposal would not be commensurate with the landmark status of the site and as it would entail the over-provision of car parking spaces, it would not be an appropriate retail use of this site and so to accede to it would contravene the site's zoning. The proposal would thus be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Hugh D. Morrison
Planning Inspector

3rd September 2019