Colney Fields, St Albans

CLIENT

Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd

LOCAL AUTHORITY

St Albans City and District Council

SCHEME DESCRIPTION

c. 200,000ft², open A1 retail development

SERVICES

Community Engagements
Local Plan Representations and Examinations
Planning Applications
Retail Assessments

CASE STUDIES

Retail

Turning dreams into reality: securing a major, open A1, retail development in the Green Belt at J22 of the M25.

Turning a green belt site next to the M25 in Hertfordshire into a 200,000ft² retail park is, perhaps the stuff of dreams. But it is the kind of dream that we like to turn into reality.

Sainsbury's was keen to utilise 10 acres of land between its store and the M25 for a retail park. However, the site was in the Green Belt. Faced with the inherent difficulty of trying to get retail development on a green belt site next to the M25, we looked for innovative solutions.

A review of local concerns in nearby communities including dialogue with local Councillors identified that despite having a by-pass, the village of London Colney was still attracting significant lorry movements to a garage with a major diesel outlet, adjacent HGV recovery facilities and various other vehicle related uses. The Council agreed this was a non-conforming use.

Complementary policies were then drafted such that the garage and adjacent land should be re-designated as a housing site and that the green belt boundary should be re-drawn to accommodate retail development with an agreement ensuring that the non-conforming uses would be relocated or extinguished and residential permission granted prior to the implementation of the retail development. After





generating local support the pair of policies were taken forward through the Local Plan.

The next challenge was to secure an open A1 consent, part of which would facilitate Marks & Spencer coming to the wider site and to avoid a call-in. Further negotiations with the local planning authority, County Council, neighbouring authorities and the Government Office resulted in permission with a condition limiting units to maximum and minimum sizes such that the planning authority’s aspirations to attract a department store and further unit shops into the city centre would not be prejudiced.

Marks & Spencer’s flagship store is firmly established at the site by using part of the consent and the remainder of the retail park trades very successfully.