

Laura Crawford

From: jamie@colerainebid.com
Sent: 20 May 2022 15:00
To: Denise Dickson
Cc: Planning
Subject: Letter to Planning Re; Coleraine Town Centre
Attachments: Marks and Spencer Official Response re Planning Proposal.docx

Dear Ms Dickson

I trust you are well. I have attached our organisations letter of response with regards to the current planning application by Marks and Spencer which has been widely reported on social media this week.

Thank you for taking our comments and concerns into account. We all appreciate your teams time and efforts. If you require anything further please do get in touch.

Lastly, could we please have a reply confirming receipt of above.

Kind Regards

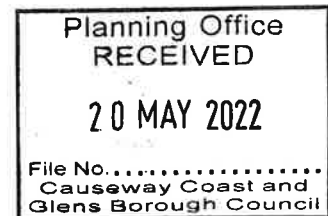
Jamie Hamill

Business Improvement District Manager

2 Abbey Street, Coleraine, BT52 1DS

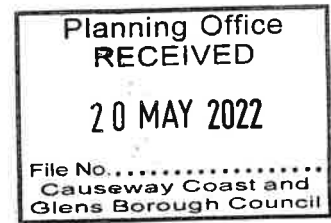
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COLERAINE BUSINESS IMPROVEME

Coleraine Business Improvement District
2 Abbey Street
Coleraine
18th May 2022



LA01/2021/0933/F: Marks & Spencer Application - Unit 12 & 13 Riverside Retail Park

Dear Sirs

Firstly, we warmly welcome Marks & Spencer's overall intention to invest and expand their food offering in the fabulous historic market town of Coleraine. However, as a Business Improvement organisation we are saddened that the current proposal is to move from a prominent town centre location at the heart of The Diamond, to an out of centre site. Upon review, we do not believe this will be in Coleraine's best interests in either the short or long term.

With town centres currently grappling in post pandemic recovery mode, rising operational costs and a consumer cost of living crisis, any proposed move to an out of the town centre should be viewed as detrimental in both the short and longer term for the health of our town centre. Indeed it seems to us to be contrary to the "towns centre first approach" detailed within regional planning policy.

As one of Coleraine's anchor retail attractions at the heart of The Diamond we would argue that this proposed move will cause significant adverse impacts to the future vitality and viability of Coleraine Town Centre, as it will increase vacancy, impact upon investor confidence, and will set a wide-ranging precedent for other retailers to move out of town to the Riverside Centre. In addition we would like to outline that;

- M&S is one of Coleraine's much loved anchor multiples, attracting and contributing significantly daily footfall in its own right around The Diamond area of town, which in turn directly enhances Coleraine's vitality through linked trips.
- Consumers choose to visit Coleraine because of such key anchor tenants which include M&S
- The majority of the current make-up of The Diamond in Coleraine comes from traditional banking and insurance sectors, which unquestionably have been and will continue to see disruption and decline of physical stores which will result in even further increasing vacancy rates.

We are also concerned about the overall change in strategy at Riverside from what was always supposed to be bulky comparison stores, as per the Local Development Plan to now accommodating and facilitating 'convenience retailing stores', to move from the town centre. Surely Coleraine town centre cannot be sacrificed to enhance the portfolio of tenants of an offshore landlord at an out of town retail-park.

Following a poll carried out by Coleraine BID, the majority of town centre stakeholder responses believe that the current proposal will have an adverse impact on both the vitality and viability of an existing centre; 90% of existing business respondents agreed that the proposed move will have a negative impact along with substantial changes in visitor shopping patterns and linked trips to other titles in town centre, (especially around the Diamond, Queen St, Abbey St, Stable Lane, The Diamond Shopping Centre & Bridge street areas). Therefore we would formally oppose the current application and urge our friends at M & S to reconsider their partnership with our town Centre, given there are several available alternative sites and options for them to remain in town.

Regards

Jamie Hamill MBA BA FIPM
Business Improvement District Manager Coleraine
Fellow of The Institute of Place Management & RGS.