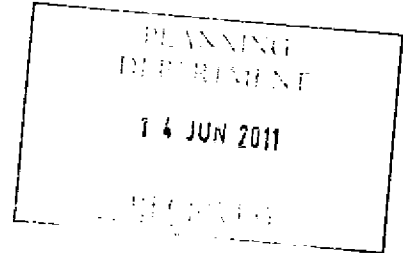


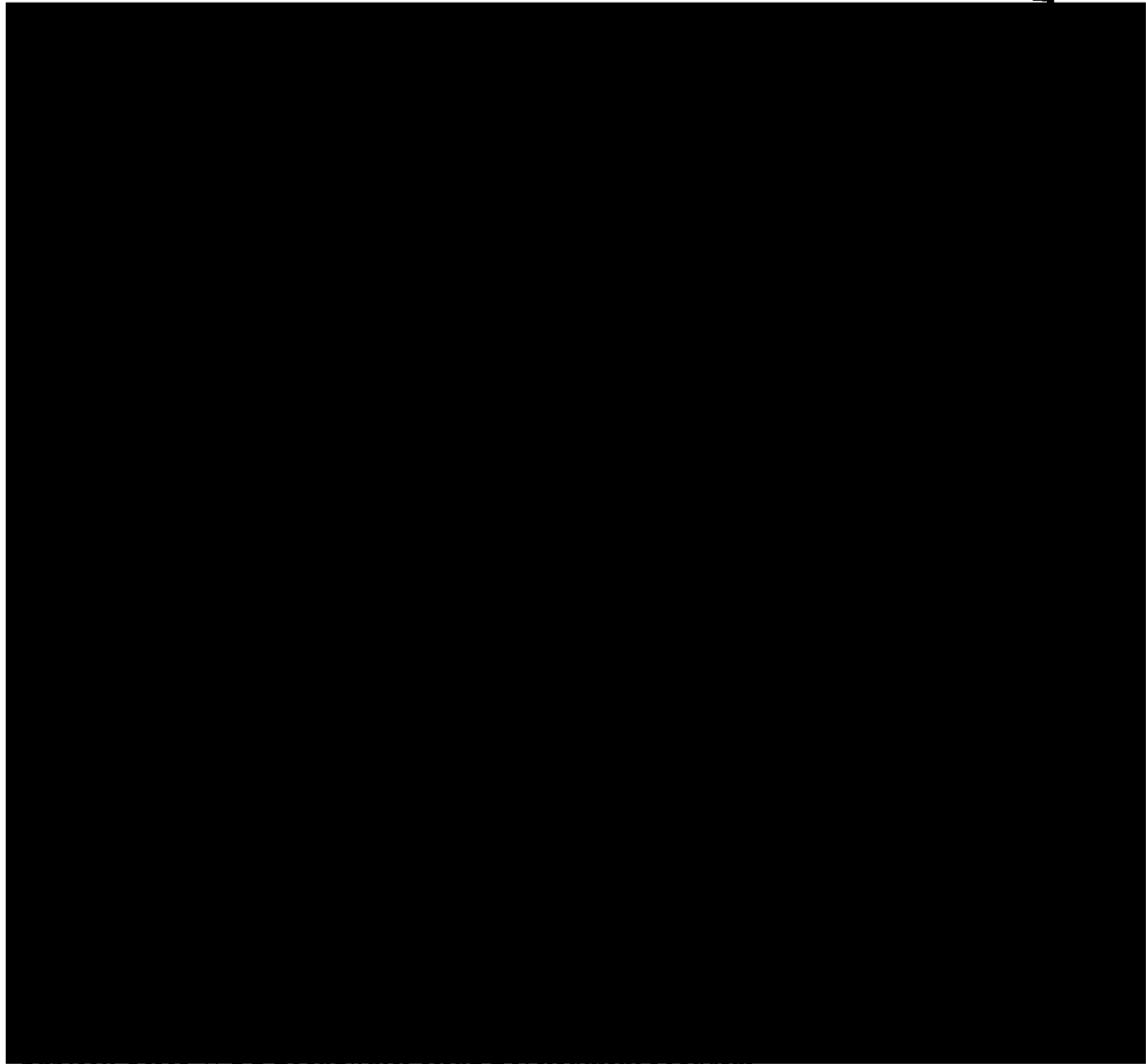
RA

Sally Vallance

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 13 June 2011 09:47
To: Planning
Subject: Fwd: Tesco WGC Broadwater Road Development Proposal



Begin forwarded message:



Dear Councillor

We attended a meeting last Wednesday evening arranged by the Welwyn Garden Society to learn about the issues around the proposed new Tesco development on Broadwater Road, and the Society's opposition to it. The meeting was packed with over 250 WGC residents, a large proportion

being from the east side of the town. Having had the effects of the proposals explained, and having studied the reports and information on the Welwyn Garden Society website (www.wgcsoc.org.uk, including Shaun O'Reilly's letter dated 16 May 2011 to Richard Aston of the Planning Dept, we write to formally register our opposition to the plans. We are forwarding this note separately to Grant Shapps MP, Philip Clarke, Chief Executive of Tesco, and Mary Portas, leading the government-backed review of the decline of the High Street, particularly caused by the likes of Tesco.

We do not need to reiterate the issues in detail raised on the WGCSoc site, which are there for all to see, but we wish to stress the following points:

- The Spenhill report and the assumptions in it are very seriously flawed, as outlined in Shaun O'Reilly's letter. These must be challenged by the Council. The fact that the proposed Tesco site was bought and plans developed in the knowledge that there were listed buildings on the site and that retail activity was not permitted, coupled with the Council Needs Assessment Update in November 2010 which found there was no need to change retail needs, demonstrates either extreme naivety or unbridled arrogance on the part of Spenhill.
- By moving shoppers out of the existing town centre and creating a new town centre, the Tesco development will decimate the existing shops, as well as the unique character and spirit of the town. (The current expansion and development of the Sainsbury's store - apart from the threat to the future of the City Pharmacy, which is the subject of a separate protest - is a completely different situation, in that it is widely recognised that a supermarket in a town centre attracts shoppers into the town and surrounding shops thrive.)
- The development also represents a serious threat to outlying neighbourhood retailers on the east side of town, and the demise of Morrisons is seen as inevitable. This was a particular concern to residents on the east side at the meeting.
- It is unrealistic to suggest that shoppers at the new Tesco will have easy access to the existing town centre, as that access for pedestrians will be restricted and awkward.
- The implications for increased numbers of cars and heavy goods vehicles along Broadwater Road and through the town are very worrying, in terms of the impact on pedestrians, congestion and pollution.
- Many of the inducements included in the Spenhill proposals do not make financial sense. The swimming pool cannot be financially viable, given that the Hatfield pool currently makes a major financial loss. Similarly the proposed Leisure Centre will inevitably ruin the Gosling Stadium facilities. Those proposals will inevitably lead to financial bailouts by the local authority. That and the cost and revenue loss implications for the council of other local impacts, including the closure of neighbourhood stores, will create a drain on council finances, especially in these straitened times. Any attempt to recover

that cost through increased council tax would be totally unacceptable to local voters. The 1800 new jobs promised by Spenhall obviously takes no account of jobs lost elsewhere.

- There is of course already another large Tesco store within 2 miles of WGC town centre, with easy vehicle access. The new Chief Executive of Tesco, Philip Clarke, last week in his first official speech, highlighted the rapid development of the 'click and collect' trend, enabling shoppers to order on line and pick up their groceries without having to walk round the store. If Mr Clarke means what he says, it implies that stores can reduce the retail space they need and Tesco should be able to manage with just one store in this area.

We believe it is vital for our Councillors to reach the decision that the proposed Tesco development is not needed, will cost the local authority money which council tax payers will resent, and will radically alter the classic model of the long established 'garden city' concept which is the envy of other areas. Please do not allow this model to be demolished on your watch.

