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31 October 2010

Development Control  
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council  
The Campus  
Welwyn Garden City  
Herts  
AL8 6AE



Dear Sirs,

**PLANNING APPLICATION NO. N6/2010/2055/MA**  
**PLANNING APPLICATION NO. N6/2010/2060/LB**  
**BROADWATER ROAD WEST REGENERATION – TESCO/SPENHILL**

I object to the Tesco (Spenhill) proposals on the following grounds:-

1. The retail proposals are contrary to the existing commercial/industrial zone designation under the local planning policy.
2. The Retail Impact Assessment (RIA) does not satisfactorily demonstrate that there is sufficient capacity or need to justify such an increase in retail floorspace.
3. The new store + additional unit shops proposed will adversely affect the existing town centre retail offer resulting in further closures. The RIA does not adequately consider these impacts.
4. Similarly, the adverse effect on local shopping areas such as Peartree, Woodhall, etc are not adequately considered.
5. The retail element of the proposals has increased significantly and the leisure facility has shrunk commensurately compared with the proposals exhibited to the public last year.
6. The ratio of food/comparison goods has also increased from 75/25 to 62.5/37.5 and in a much larger store than originally proposed. This will further adversely affect the existing town centre retail units.
7. There are more than sufficient supermarkets/foodhalls within the existing town centre and the wider town area to cater for residents' needs and to provide satisfactory price competition.
8. There is insufficient justification for another supermarket which will merely draw trade from the other existing supermarkets and the proposal does not demonstrate that it would generate sufficient 'new' customers to justify the additional retail floorspace created.
9. The RIA does not mention Debenhams. What other errors might there be in their assessment?

10. The "Town Park" is dissected by the access road to the Pall Mall distribution warehouse site which, with the HGV traffic running through it, makes a mockery of this "amenity".
11. The traffic impact on the Bridge Road/Broadwater Road junction is a major concern. Does the traffic impact assessment properly consider the vehicle movements generated by the **complete** regeneration of the Broadwater Road development area or just the Tesco (Spenhill) application area?
12. Of even greater concern is the traffic impact on the Hunters Bridge /John Lewis roundabout particularly as Tesco show an internet shopping delivery depot in their store proposals. The traffic from this, together with that from the proposed hotel, offices and YMCA buildings to the west of the site will all have to turn left on Bridge Road resulting in a significant increase of vehicular traffic at this junction at all times of the day.
13. The pedestrian bridge over the railway is shortened and has a (too) small lift but otherwise remains the same. The narrow width therefore will not be able to accommodate the additional pedestrian traffic necessary to demonstrate satisfactory integration with the existing town centre. It will be a significant constriction to flow.
14. The "green corridor" shown running through the Howard Centre and across this existing footbridge is also a mockery.
15. The leisure centre is now proposed to contain a 25m pool compared with the 50m pool originally proposed. Wet leisure centres are unlikely to be viable and, with the Gosling facilities so near, will this amenity ever be built?
16. The design of the exterior parts of the proposals are of poor aesthetic quality, do little to enhance the public realm and are not in keeping with the character of Welwyn Garden City. They present a blank face to the railway and, in conjunction with the monolithic façade of the rear of the Howard Centre, only exacerbate the "corridor" effect that does nothing to enhance the vista from the railway.

The increased size of the proposed supermarket is a real concern and in particular the higher percentage of comparison goods will affect both John Lewis and smaller retailers. Certainly if Tesco took too much trade from John Lewis such that John Lewis decided their department store was no longer viable it would have a devastating effect on the town centre.

An Outline planning application only has been submitted for a large part of the site comprising residential, YMCA, doctor's surgery, care home and hotel . Should full planning consent be granted for the north part of the site there is no binding commitment on Tesco (Spenhill) to develop out the southern area. Therefore the current full application proposals are substantially retail and commercial development only.

For the Broadwater Road West site to be properly considered in regeneration terms, **all** parts of the site should be part of the proposal since that is the only way to ensure there is a properly integrated scheme. It is only on this basis that a proper assessment can be made of the scheme's full impact on the town centre, its adherence to the founding and continuing principles of Ebenezer Howard and the Garden City Movement, and of the benefits, if any, to the residents of the City and of any enhancement to the public realm.

The Tesco (Spenhill) proposals do nothing to enhance the town centre. In their Retail Impact Assessment, they cite the effects of the Southampton scheme as justification for their proposals. Given they state the Southampton edge of town centre scheme "*produced the anticipated realignment of the Town's pre-existing retail centre of gravity*" the question must be asked whether Welwyn Garden City wants its retail centre of gravity shifted across to the other side of the mainline railway?

In utilising the existing (extremely narrow) footbridge that will constrict flows to and from the existing town centre, together with offering 3 hours free car parking, Tesco (Spenhill) have devised a scheme which is blatantly Tesco-centric. Far from integrating their scheme with the town centre, they have cynically turned their back on it. In so doing they demonstrate total disinterest in the town, its character and its residents and show themselves focussed solely on maximising profits.

This truly would result in a town centre of two halves – so much for integration. Ebenezer Howard would turn in his grave.

This is not Southampton, it is Welwyn Garden City, known worldwide for its garden city planning principles.

This proposal goes against those fundamental principles of Welwyn Garden City and should be rejected.

Yours faithfully,

