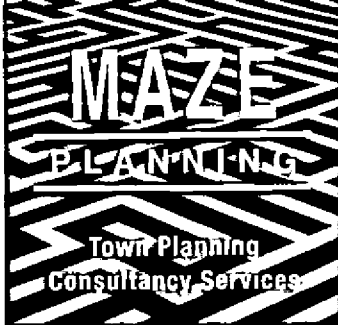


RA



Welwyn Hatfield  
 Borough Council  
 Planning Department  
 Council Offices, The Campus  
 Welwyn Garden City  
 Herts  
 AL8 6JT

For Richard Aston



1<sup>st</sup> November 2010.

Dear Mr Aston.

**Planning and listed building applications N6/2010/2055/MA and N6/2010/2060/LB  
 Former Shredded Wheat Factory Complex and Land Adjoining at Broadwater Road  
 West WELWYN GARDEN CITY Hertfordshire AL7 3AY**

I am writing to you as a reasonably long standing resident of Welwyn Garden City and planning consultant, in order to formally object to Tesco's applications on the above site. I am concerned primarily that the proposals will cause significant harm to the vitality and viability of the existing town centre and undermine the efforts of all parties to maintain the health of the town centre and secure its long term future. The development will also I fear, be likely to have a significant harmful effect on the vitality and viability of local neighbourhood centres in the area as well.

Before I set out a summary of other reasons why I believe the Council should refuse these applications I must ask if the applications have been advertised as a major departure from the Development Plan, which I believe to be the case. Perhaps you could confirm that this has been done in the appropriate way.

I believe that should the Council decide ultimately that the scheme should proceed and be approved, then the applications should be called in by the Government Office for the East of England, and a Public Inquiry should then be held at which all parties would be able to have a legitimate say in the outcome. Could you also confirm to me if the Government Office has been sent a copy of all the plans so that they can consider what actions to take should such a resolution be made by your Planning Committee, including a formal Direction to the Council not to issue any planning permission.

I do not consider that Welwyn Garden City needs yet another retail superstore. It already has others in the town centre and at Panshanger as well as another Tesco's store at Oldings Corner. I also fear that the benefits and regeneration that Tesco's promise are but a mirage and that after the new store is built, should permission be granted, then those offers will fall away and never be delivered.

**MAZE PLANNING LIMITED**

1 Rooks Close Welwyn Garden City Herts AL8 6JT



Director CHRIS WATTS MRTPI BA Hons

Before any such scheme ever gets to your Planning Committee I believe that the Council should ask Tesco's formally for the Heads of Terms of any proposed Section 106 Planning Agreement and secure Counsel's Opinion on the deliverability of that draft Agreement.

This is not the way to develop a major new extension to the town centre's boundaries and range of shops. The right way is through the emerging LDF Core Strategy process as the replacement Development Plan. This is, in effect a pre-emptive planning application designed to test the nerve of the Council. I hope it will remain strong and resist such efforts, and support the existing town centre and traders.

One can only imagine the effect on traders and shops in the town should, for example John Lewis decide that this is a step too far and leave, since Tesco's could potentially be a strategic risk to their long term future in Welwyn, given Tesco's expansion into many non – food sales goods and products.

Sainsbury's and Waitrose have demonstrated their commitment to the town through their recent expansion plans which are being put into effect as I write. I hope that you support them and ensure that a rigorous examination of the Tesco offer and retail impact assessment is undertaken by an independent specialist.

The offer of a smaller leisure/watersplash centre than the swimming pool which was previously put forward in a Tesco's led public consultation exercise some time ago, is derisory. The town lost its Lido at Stanborough Park, and that has never been replaced. This latest offer is not a satisfactory replacement. There is no need for a doctor's surgery in this area either since there is another major surgery already operating at Hall Grove and another one at Parkway.

The offer to provide some new floorspace for Business use is to be applauded but I feel that there should be much more employment land developed here as part of any regeneration so that a wider range of employment and training opportunities can be offered to young people in the town. A hotel is to be welcomed, but that will happen here anyway one day, through the alternative plans which are intended to be delivered through the Council's own adopted 2008 SPD for Broadwater Rd West.

The applicant has submitted a statement comparing the viability of their scheme against that of the mix of uses proposed in that SPD. Perhaps the Council should also ask Tesco's to submit a viability statement to show the impact that the development would be likely to have on the viability of existing retailers and stores in the town centre, as the real comparator.

Overall, I believe that the applications:

- Are premature in relation to making such significant changes to the boundaries of an existing town centre, which should be more properly put forward and tested through the current LDF Core Strategy process;
- Are contrary to the Council's adopted SPD for the Broadwater Road West land, and would undermine its key principles and masterplan, if approved;
- Would cause substantial noise pollution and have a harmful impact on air quality in the vicinity of the site;

- Cause harm to highway safety through a significant increase in traffic which would be mainly car borne in relation to the retail store, and also related to increased visitor, service and delivery traffic;
- Would result in a development which would harm the established character and appearance of the Garden City, and affect the setting of the nearby Conservation Area to its detriment;
- Would result in a residential development which would be at too high a density with too little useable green space, and which would not be in keeping with the pattern of residential development elsewhere in the Garden City;
- Would not provide for a more comprehensive and better pedestrian crossing over the railway station which is urgently needed. The scheme's offer is paltry and again derisory. This is not the way to provide better integration and pedestrian linkage with the existing town centre. It should be done in conjunction with Network Rail, the railway companies, the Council and the Howard Centre owners, as part of a comprehensive approach and only through the LDF Core Strategy process;
- Until that more comprehensive scheme for pedestrian movements across the railway is developed and delivered, the effect of this scheme will be to create an isolated and competing set of retail superstore and shops, to the detriment of the existing town centre;
- Would require a significant Section 106 Planning Agreement, which would provide for new, and enhanced infrastructure, amenity space, education and other services which has not yet been offered to, or been tested by the Council;

In conclusion, I would urge the Council to refuse these applications and to stand by the town and its community, many of whom came to the public meeting that the WGC Society and The Welwyn & Hatfield Times organised last week. Out of approx 250 people present only one person confirmed that they supported the applications. This is surely evidence that the community has already decided that it does not need another retail superstore here and that the consequences of allowing one to become established on an isolated, heavily trafficked and unconnected site would be disastrous for the town centre.

Localism is already being put into practice here and I hope that the officers maintain the position that has always been the case for retail superstore led scheme of this kind on this site, support the community, and recommend that the applications be refused, should the applications be referred to the Planning Committee for a decision.

Yours Sincerely,

