



Welwyn and Hatfield Planning Dept

Dear Sir

**RE: Planning Application N6/2010/2055/MA – FORMER SHREDDERED WHEAT COMPLEX**

I write on behalf of Gosling Sports Park which is a local charity and has been based in Welwyn Garden City for 51 years.

Gosling employs over 200 staff and hosts 5 independent businesses on its 50 acre site. The Charity receives no public sector funding and relies on income from subscriptions and memberships. Gosling has managed to thrive in the local area embracing the 'Big Society' vision and working with clubs and community in providing health, fitness, learning and employment for thousands of people. Gosling now hosts international events, is a training venue for the Olympics and Para Olympics and welcomes people of all ages and abilities including wheel chair sports, health improvement and rehabilitation as well as Wimbledon and Olympic stars.

Two years ago the Sports Park embarked on an ambitious investment programme to build a state-of-the-art spa and fitness facility for local residents. This investment was required in order to ensure the charity remained viable into the future and as a result has been hugely successful generating a trading surplus for the first time in ten years.

The proposed leisure development scheme forming part of the Tesco superstore site is of great concern to the Board of Trustees. With our recent investment and private sector finance of £5m the new fitness and leisure facilities will provide an unwelcome competitor to the local market place and threaten our main revenue stream and thus jeopardize our existing business model. With regret we would have to advise that this venture could risk the future of the Sports Park and a unique and much loved community destination.

If there is a proposal to invest funding into the local area for new sporting and leisure facilities as part of a S106 contribution or other donation by the land owner then this is truly a welcome opportunity. We would like to propose that we act in unity with all local community stakeholders to ensure that this is fully investigated to ensure that we deliver the best value possible and ultimately to benefit and meet the needs of our local residents.

We would also like to offer our view that it would be more cost effective and convenient for local residents if the facilities were based on an existing community site. This would avoid duplication of services and therefore costs, reduce traffic congestion as well as being more convenient for customers. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with colleagues at the local authority.

In summary, this letter seeks to raise our objection to the leisure scheme proposed as part of the planning application. The scheme risks the viability of Gosling Sports Park which has been a successful local charity, employer and well loved community destination for over 50 years. We would encourage a more unified approach to a new leisure development in the town and hope that we could contribute towards such discussions with other local stakeholders.

Kind regards

**Steve Ryan, Chairman Gosling Sports Park**