

PLANNING
DEPARTMENT

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Sent: 03 November 2010 00:40**To:** Planning**Cc:** **Subject:** Shredded Wheat Factory Complex

Re: Shredded Wheat Factory Complex and land adjoining Broadwater Road West, W G C.
To Planning Development Control, Welwyn Hatfield Council.

Planning Application No N6/2010/2055/MA and N6/2010/2060/LB.

My prime objection to the present applications is the proposal to have it contain a very major supermarket. From the very first master plan and all subsequent town plans...mostly designed by Louis de Soissons, and supported by the original Company in 1920 and the subsequent Development Corporation and Commission of the New Towns, it was recognised that the major railway from north to south which almost cut the town area in half led to the decision to locate the whole of the town centre retail and other town centre functions on one side of the railway. Related to this decision are the magnificent Parkway and Howardsgate and Campus that are probably the leading features of this World Renowned Garden City now celebrating its 90th year. The special significance of this town and its history and development are also recognised by National Government in the granting of special protection via a management scheme etc in addition to Planning laws. Whereas their used to be a seperation between the New Towns Commission operating the Management Scheme and the Local Council the Planning Acts, for very many years now the District (now Borough) Council has administered all these matters alone, which at the very least puts huge pressure on them to act, and be seen to act not only in the best interests of the whole community but also within the special aura of the town.

Over the years there have been changes to the town centre to meet perceived alterations in demand which seem to me to have all been met or able to be met within the present total area, and as many are pointing out in respect of supermarket provision that M&S; Waitrose and Sainsbury exist with the latter two having already or currently in the process of enormous increases in area. I cannot see how this relatively small town can accommodate a substantial increase in supermarket retail nearby its town centre without having a very predictable effect on almost all of the smaller shops in both the town centre and local neighbourhoods, leading to their closure. It is difficult to predict whether the wonderful John Lewis and its trade might be seriously affected, but the minimum size of the existing pedestrian link from the east new supermarket to the west town centre via the first floor of the Howard Centre Complex cannot be seen as a generous and inviting connection across the railway. May it be supposed that those parking in the new Tesco (for free) will first cross the bridge to look about and shop, and upon returning will visit the Tesco to trolley their purchases to their car.

I understand there have been recent refused applications for retail provision on or nearby this application site, and that such refusals are supported within the current district or similar plan. It is therefore of interest to know what meetings and discussions, if any, have taken place between the applicant and the Council with its members and officers, and whether any concessions or suggestions have been mooted which could ease the application in spite of current understood planning criteria. The proposal for certain social provisions such as a fitness and pool suite etc, even if wrapped up in some unbreakable 106 or similar legal agreement to include help with future running costs, will be seen by many as just a carrot to encourage changing the current Planning.

The question of whether to grant consent for the huge retail (or some modified similar) which is the fundamental element of this application, in principle, is so elemental and vital as to make a detail study of all else at this stage difficult to justify...matters such as the proposed roadways, traffic movement and likely effect on existing highways especially the crossroads to the east of Hunters Bridge.

I have not referred to the relative proximity of a huge Tesco Supermarket on the Garden City side of nearby Hatfield, of Morrisons on the north east side of W G C and so on as enumerated by other concerned persons, but I find it of interest to read in todays national paper under the heading reading "High Street "IN PERIL" as 12,000 shops shut in a year" ...Traditional high streets are under threat from aggressive expansion by supermarkets that has left one in seven urban stores empty, it is claimed. Almost 90 per cent of all new shop space given planning approval last year went to the big four supermarkets. Research published today by the Association of Convenience Stores. Its chief E executive James Lowman called for Government and councils to "stand firm for the principles of town centre first".

Finally I cannot resist remarking that the only reason that this application exists is because of the massive collapse in the ability of this town and nation to design and manufacture competatively. It seems only a short time ago that we produced shredded wheat, Roche products, Nortons, Murphy Radios and TVs, Polycell, Dawneys, Lincoln Electric and more including ICI. What is our future? But at least on Shire Park etc we accommodate for great numbers of administrative personell who work for possibly the most successful international British Company—TESCO. Provided it doesnt go the way of Cadbury !!

Yours sincerely. [REDACTED] (retired local architect)

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