

Bower Ashton Residents Association

Seeking to improve and protect our local environment

South and East Area Planning Team
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For the attention of Daniel Stone, Principal Planning Officer

2 April 2010

Dear Sir

**REFERENCE 10/00812/P - NEW SUPERMARKET DEVELOPMENT AT ASHTON GATE STADIUM
REFERENCE 10/00813/P – OUTLINE APPLICATION FOR REDEVELOPMENT OF SAINSBURYS SITE,
WINTERSTOKE ROAD FOR MIXED USE**

We write on behalf of Bower Ashton Residents' Association in relation to the above applications. The Association represents the residents of the eighty or so local dwellings in Bower Ashton, adjacent to Ashton Gate.

Summary

Application Ref 10/00812/P

We strongly **OBJECT** to this application. The reasons for our objection are summarised below.

1. Need. The area is already extremely well served by supermarkets of various shapes and sizes. In our opinion the Applicant has failed to demonstrate a coherent argument why a supermarket in this location would be in anyone's interest, other than his own.
2. The impact upon the local highway network, in particular the increased traffic densities on Ashton Road, resulting from a major development at this location. In our view these are likely to be significant. We have severe reservations that these are understood properly by the applicant or will be mitigated adequately.
3. The associated issues of public safety, displaced parking and consequential reduced quality of life for those residents living in the immediate vicinity of Greville Smythe Park, arising from increased traffic densities.
4. The likely impact upon local business in the immediate area, particularly to local, small retail businesses on North Street and the area immediately adjoining and potential loss of permanent employment to local people.
5. Sustainability. Taken in the round, there is little evidence for the proposals aligning with the principles of sustainable development or for them leading to more sustainable communities.
6. The general absence of imagination or creativity within the proposals.

Application Ref 10/00813/P

We **OBJECT** to this application at this stage. We have significant reservations about this application because of its potential impact on the local highways network and traffic flows, particularly at peak times. The local highways situation affected by this application must not be considered in isolation from application

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Ref 10/00812/P (above), the construction of the new Bristol City stadium and the proposed major development area in Ashton Vale / N Somerset.

Analysis and Discussion

Application 10/00812/P comprises relocation of the Sainsburys store on Winterstoke Road to a larger site at Ashton Gate. The Winterstoke Road site is located in an area used predominantly, if not entirely for retail use. Ashton Gate is used for sport and leisure and borders considerable residential dwellings, as well as some retail. This is not a 'like for like' swap, either in terms of size or use.

The whole 'out-of-town' development philosophy that has been promoted so heavily since the 1980s has been promotion of large retail facilities located away from residential centres with good transportation links. Access by car has been actively encouraged. The advantages to the consumer have been promoted as better access and greater choice. It can be argued that the applicant's current store was part of this development philosophy. The advantages to society were often promoted as beneficial overall, with reduced 'environmental' impact within residential areas, often in terms of traffic.

In this context, the application 10/00812/P is a contradiction. It comprises relocation of a superstore from the outskirts of residential areas, expansion and will push impacts back *into* residential areas. The reinforcing of the highway network that will be necessary to mitigate these impacts, is likewise focussed in the very areas we are trying to avoid, those currently in residential and leisure use. And all this, in an area that is already extremely well served by national and international supermarket chains.

As most people visiting supermarkets do so in their own vehicles, it is apparent that traffic associated with the Winterstoke Road store is going to be displaced into the centre of Ashton. At present there is acute traffic disruption during times immediately either side of matches, which is managed by the police. In the developed situation the traffic impacts would be chronic and unmanaged. Even if the application were for a replacement store of identical size, the impact to local residents would be significant. As it is for a much larger store, however, it will be more so. We find the arguments presented within some of the traffic statements for there being "no significant effects" in relation to traffic to be unsubstantiated.

Traffic is already a major concern for Bower Ashton residents. The proposed new supermarket would draw traffic in on Winterstoke Road and the A370 (Brunel Way). These roads and in particular the Winterstoke Road/Brunel Way junction are already highly congested well outside of peak traffic hours. The proposed development is likely to increase traffic and delays here significantly, which would also increase pollution. We urge that the impacts to the highways and traffic from this application be considered in the context

The only reason the Applicant is making this application is because it offers the opportunity to increase market share within the retail sector in this part of South Bristol. By definition, this sector comprises other retailers, whether existing supermarkets or the small - and often family run - businesses that comprise this part of Ashton / Southville / Bedminster. If this development is a success in commercial terms, it will, by definition, be at the expense of these other businesses.

The only practical advantage of the application to the consumer is a greater diversity of 'lines' under one roof. This should not be presented as greater 'choice' in general, however, as they will be the applicant's lines – and there are plenty of local people who do not want to do all their shopping under one roof, especially when there are different and better 'lines' available at other local shops.

There are sufficient studies in circulation that show that superstore development in urban situations kills off the local, small-scale competition. It happened previously when Sainsburys originally developed the Winterstoke Rd site. We can expect that to be repeated on North Street around the Tobacco Factory. Yet this very area is a success story in regeneration and precisely the kind of situation that should be treasured (as it is by local people), as it is a model for other parts of the city. Retail outlets in this area are under

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significant threat from this application and this should be acknowledged within this application. We find it staggering that an environmental assessment was apparently not required for a development of this size – this would have had to acknowledge the likely impact to society, had it been undertaken.

Close

It is telling that we as an Association have not come across a single local person or retailer who considers the proposals presented in Application 10/00812/P to be a good thing. We are extremely disappointed with the absence of imagination or creativity associated with the proposals. Arsenal vacated Highbury for the Emirates and left a legacy – a flagship project of mixed use development. Bristol City plan to vacate Ashton Gate and all that can be proposed is a superstore that is neither necessary nor wanted by local people.

Should you require clarification on any point or wish to consult with the Association further on this, please contact me at the above address or on direct telephone no. 0117 9339305 during work hours.

Yours sincerely

Alasdair Groves, Chairman