

UDC Development Control Committee

Meeting on 7 April 2010

Planning Applications UTT/1323/09/FUL and UTT/1451/09/FUL

I am speaking on behalf of the Save Walden Town Centre group and want to raise the considerable concerns that we have with the Advanced Reports prepared by planning officers in relation to the Sainsbury's and Tesco development applications. All of the points I will be making apply equally to both developments as the planning considerations are the same.

Our fundamental concern is that the summary of the issues identified by planning officers omits to consider the most important pieces of planning policy affecting these developments. The planners are largely relying on local and regional planning policies and have almost completely ignored three much more important and over-riding national policies - **PPS1, PPS4 and PPG13**.

PPS1 and PPG13 have not been mentioned at all by the planners and PPS4 has only been mentioned in relation to one of the Planning Considerations. We believe that these are serious omissions.

PPS4, Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth, was adopted on the 29th December 2009 and contains most of the national planning policy as it applies to supermarket developments. The key objectives of PPS4 are “to deliver more sustainable patterns of development, reduce the need to travel, especially by car, and to respond to climate change” and “to promote the vitality and viability of town and other centres”.

In our opinion, the proposed developments run completely counter to all of the key policies of PPS1, PPS4 and PPG13. Whilst this committee will not yet have sufficient evidence to reach a conclusion on this, what is unarguable is that all of these policies apply to the proposed developments - and indeed are far more fundamental than the local and regional policies cited.

Before I finish I would like to point out that we handed in to the Planning Office last December comprehensive reports highlighting all these policies but our reports do not appear to have even been considered by planning offices before issuing the Advanced Reports in front of you.

The Save Walden Town Centre group urges this Committee to ask the planning officers to re-examine the main planning consideration issues in the full light of PPS1, PPS4 and PPG13 national policies.

We have detailed the key policy points in writing which I will now pass to the Chair.

WRITTEN SUBMISSION

The most important provisions of **PPS4** which apply to the proposed developments, and which have been omitted from the list of Planning Considerations, are:

1. The key objectives of PPS4 are to “deliver more sustainable patterns of development, reduce the need to travel, especially by car and respond to climate change” and to “promote the vitality and viability of town and other centres”. In doing so the Government wants “main town centre uses to be focussed in existing centres”;
2. Policy EC10 within PPS4 requires that applications should be assessed against, among other things, their impact on minimising climate change, accessibility by foot, cycling and public transport, high quality design and local employment;
3. Policy EC16 within PPS4 requires that applications for main town centre uses which are not in a centre (ie both the developments proposed) should also be assessed by reference to additional considerations including their impact on town centre vitality and viability, whether the proposal is of an appropriate scale, and the impact of the proposal on in-centre trade/turnover and on trade in the wider area;
4. Policy EC17 within PPS4 requires authorities to refuse planning applications for non-town centre retail development (ie both these developments) which are not in accordance with the Local Plan if there is clear evidence that there is a significant adverse impact under any one of the 11 considerations in EC10 or EC16.

The most important provisions of **PPS1** which apply to the proposed developments, and which have been omitted from the list of Planning Considerations, are:

1. paragraph 8 (which provides that applications should be determined in accordance with the Local Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise);
2. paragraph 27, that retail development should both be located where everyone can access on foot, bicycle or public transport rather than having to rely on access by car and be located in existing centres to promote their vitality and viability.

The most important provisions of **PPG13** which apply to the proposed developments, and which have been omitted from the list of Planning Considerations, are:

1. paragraph 4, to integrate planning and transport , to promote more sustainable transport choices, to reduce the need to travel, especially by car, and to promote accessibility by public transport, walking and cycling;
2. paragraphs 6 and 20, to focus major generators of traffic in town centres, and to locate day to day facilities, such as supermarkets, in local centres so that they are accessible by walking and cycling;
3. paragraph 19, that shopping facilities are accessible to all, particularly for those who don't have a car and in order to promote social inclusion;
4. paragraph 26, that shopping development should not be designed and located on the assumption that the car will represent the only realistic means of access for the vast majority of people;
5. paragraph 35, that policies for retail should seek to promote the viability and vitality of existing town centres, which should be the preferred locations for new retail developments.

Specific planning considerations which need to be identified by the planning officers:

1. **Consideration 1** should consider all the relevant provisions of PPS4. It should also consider the relevant provisions of PPS1 and PPG13. It should also consider paragraphs 8.1 and 8.2 of the Local Plan, which specifically states the need to locate retail development in town centres, and RSS6 which seeks to preserve town centres;
2. **Consideration 2** is misstated – the consideration should be of both the viability and vitality of centres, not just the economic viability, and following PPS4 should consider the entire local area affected (ie including for example Thaxted and all the neighbouring villages, not just Saffron Walden). Neither Sainsbury's nor Tesco have yet produced a realistic store catchment area - we do not believe that the area affected can be properly defined until they have. The relevant provisions of PPS1, particularly paragraph 27, and PPG13 should be considered. Local Plan policies RS1 and 2 and paragraphs 8.1 and 8.2 should be considered. PPS4, policy 3.1(d) should also be considered. This requires a detailed retail assessment for all stores with a gross floor area of over 2,500sq.m or such lower amount as a local authority specifies; the Tesco extension is just under 2,400sq.m, and given the size of Saffron Walden we find it inconceivable that a PPS4 compliant retail statement should not be required;
3. **Consideration 3** omits any mention of PPS4, PPG13 or RSS policies T1 and T4, all of which are directly relevant;
4. **Consideration 4** should consider the relevant provisions of PPS4 and PPG13 relating to the requirements for accessibility of retail development by all means of transport;
5. **Consideration 5** should consider the relevant provisions of PPS4 on design, scale and climate change impact.

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