

SAVE WALDEN TOWN CENTRE

Press Release
8 March 2010

Supermarket developments would worsen air quality and lead to a huge increase in congestion

Save Walden Town Centre spokesman, Paul Gadd, said: "The proposed supermarket developments by Sainsbury's and Tesco would lead to vastly greater levels of traffic congestion in and around Saffron Walden and would further blight the neighbouring villages. They would also increase the already dangerous levels of air pollution in some parts of Saffron Walden. Specifically, Sainsbury's own Traffic Assessment estimates that there would be on average some 8,500 shopping trips to their proposed store every Friday and Saturday."

"Sainsbury's own Retail Assessment claims that 55% of their custom would come from people who do not currently shop in Saffron Walden. If this were true, this would mean that there would be an additional 4,500 new journeys to their store every Friday and Saturday. They go on to estimate that 80% of their customers would drive through Saffron Walden to reach their store and the remaining 20% would come from the south, along the Thaxted Road."

"So, according to Sainsbury's, there would be an **additional 3,600 cars driving through Saffron Walden every Friday and every Saturday** - and this is before one even thinks of the traffic generated by local people driving out to the store. All of these 3,600 cars would have to drive down either the Thaxted Road or Peaslands Road - neither of which is remotely designed for this level of traffic. Given the congestion in Saffron Walden during peak shopping times already, the mind boggles at the thought of the extra traffic."

"The remaining traffic is predicted by Sainsbury's to come from the south, and again the effect on the rural road network through Wimbish, Debden and Thaxted in particular can only be guessed at - and this is even before one starts to factor in the effects of construction and delivery HGVs thundering through Great Dunmow, Thaxted and all the other villages along the way."

"The latest air quality figures show that there are now four areas of Saffron Walden where air pollution equals or exceeds the legally permitted levels. These are the areas around the High Street/George Street junction, the High Street/Castle Street junction, the Debden Road/London Road junction and the Thaxted Road/Radwinter Road junction. Every Saffron Walden resident walking through these areas is exposed to high levels of pollution on a daily basis. The most polluted area is around the Thaxted Road/Radwinter Road junction where residents are already exposed to air pollution levels **25% above the legal limit**, and this would be the area worst affected by further development by either Tesco or Sainsbury's."

"For these reasons it is important that as many people as possible to contact their District Councillors and MP to make their concerns known. For further information on the campaign see the www.savewaldentowncentre.org website and the *Save Walden Town Centre* page on Facebook."

ENDS

Further Information

Paul Gadd – info@savewaldentowncentre.org or 01799 521252

Reasons for opposition to Sainsbury's and Tesco expansion plans include:

1. Both applications are contrary to national, regional and local planning policy.
2. Both applicants misrepresent the 'need' for more supermarket provision in the town. At the last Tesco extension planning Inquiry the inspector was not convinced that real demand existed or that choice would be enhanced. We already have two supermarkets.
3. Research data contradicts Sainsbury's claim that a new out-of-town supermarket would attract new shoppers to the town centre.*
4. Sainsbury's claim there will be at least a 10% reduction in convenience shopping footfall in the town. Government research says the real turnover loss is likely to be between 13% and 50%.*
5. Government research shows that the main impact will be on local retail businesses - with potentially many ceasing to trade.*
6. There will be a negative impact on employment in the town with more jobs lost than created.
7. The transport impact will be significant. Unrealistic assumptions have been made about the number of shoppers arriving on foot, by bike or on public transport.
8. The air quality in the town, already near or above national safety limits in three key areas, will get worse because of the extra traffic generated.
9. 30% of Sainsbury's offer will be non-food items. 70% of Tesco's extension will be for non-food items. These will impact heavily on the viability of many local businesses.
10. Most of the Thaxted Road site is reserved for industrial and commercial use, not retail.

*See "*The Impact of Large Food Stores on Market Towns and District Centres*"
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/529570.pdf>