

SAVE WALDEN TOWN CENTRE

Press Release
25 January 2010

Save Walden Town Centre has been formed to provide a focus for those determined to protect Saffron Walden town centre from the proposed Tesco and Sainsbury's out of town centre supermarket developments. The campaign group includes local retailers, businesses, Friends of the Earth, Walden in Transition, the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (Essex) and concerned residents of Saffron Walden, as well as residents from Thaxted, Wimbish and other districts which will be blighted by the proposed developments.

Spokesman Paul Gadd said: "We are delighted to have formed *Save Walden Town Centre* to protect the historic town of Saffron Walden. People should be aware that the proposed Sainsbury's supermarket would be bigger than the current Tesco and Waitrose combined and that Tesco want to expand their existing store by 55%. We believe that either of these proposals would have a devastating effect on Saffron Walden town centre, which we are committed to defend.

Sainsbury's say that there would be a 10% reduction in footfall in the town but we think the figure could be as high as 25% or more. Government research shows that new supermarkets typically reduce local store turnover by between 13% and 50%.

The impact will not just be on food stores in the town centre. 70% of the proposed Tesco extension and 30% of the proposed Sainsbury's new store (i.e. sales areas each of around two thirds the size of Waitrose) would be devoted entirely to non-food items competing directly with the town centre stores. Also, every shopper who switches from Waitrose to either Sainsbury's or Tesco is one less person coming into the town centre and visiting the local shops, cafes and other amenities.

Either application would lead to a significant increase in traffic in the town centre and a major increase in large delivery lorries passing through the town and neighbouring communities. For example, Sainsbury's are predicting around 10,000 journeys every Friday and Saturday just from people who do not currently shop in Saffron Walden.

We want as many people as possible to be aware of the very real threat to the town centre and to write to their District Councillors, MP and Uttlesford District Council planning department."

For further information on the campaign, visit www.savewaldentowncentre.org or contact Paul Gadd on paulgadd1@hotmail.co.uk or 01799 521252.

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Notes for Editors:

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>