

# **SAVE WALDEN TOWN CENTRE**

Press Release  
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## **Save Walden Town Centre call for deferral of Tesco planning committee meeting until UDC disclose all material information**

Save Walden Town Centre have requested that the Uttlesford District Council development control committee postpone their consideration of the Tesco planning application until some important material information has been made public. The missing information relates to a Tesco claim that their proposed extension would only have a small impact on the town centre. Save Walden Town Centre says that it will be impossible for District Councillors to make a balanced judgement on the Tesco planning application if key evidence is not made public.

As part of their planning application, Tesco have claimed that new store extensions trade at only 30 - 50% of the sales densities that new stores trade at. Relying on this claim, Tesco say that their extension would have annual food sales of £2.1m and non-food sales of £3.1m. UDC have accepted this claim. If, however, the extension traded at average Tesco sales levels, its food sales would be £5.2m and non-food sales £8.5m. In fact, in Saffron Walden the turnover should be much higher than average. By comparison, the total town centre turnover currently is only around £17m in food and £35m non-food.

Save Walden Town Centre believe that the Tesco claim is not true and have been disputing the Tesco claim since the start of the year. They have repeatedly asked the UDC planning department for any information that Tesco have provided to try to support their claim, but been told that no material information had been provided either to UDC or to their retail advisers, Savills.

However, just before the planned development control committee meeting on 23 November, Savills published a report which referred to Tesco having in fact provided relevant information to them. It was this report which caused Sainsbury's to request a postponement of the committee meeting to 9 December. Since the publication of the Savills' report, Save Walden Town Centre have repeatedly requested that this information be made public so it can be properly considered and so that the public can comment on it. Despite this, UDC have refused to provide the information.

Paul Gadd, spokesman for Save Walden Town Centre, said: "We have been asking UDC for any information of this kind for many months and have been repeatedly told that none had been provided beyond a reference to a planning decision on what turned out to be a completely different sort of extension. We were amazed, therefore, to see the UDC planning officers' report refer to this information having previously been provided. It is clearly highly material to the Tesco planning application, but UDC haven't publicised it or given us a copy. I do not know why they are being so secretive.

We have now been asking for the specific information referred to in the planning officers' report for over 2 weeks. First we were told by the planning officer that we could only have it under a Freedom of Information Act request, which would take weeks if not months. Next we were told that we couldn't have the information as Savills had it, not UDC. Yet UDC are paying Savills many thousands of pounds for

their reports - all they had to do was ask Savills to email the information. We asked for the information in good time so we could review it properly and comment on it prior to the 9 December meeting. Even if we now received it a day or two before the meeting, proper consideration would be impossible. We have, therefore, very reluctantly asked UDC to postpone the consideration of the Tesco application until this information has been made properly available and everyone has had a chance to comment on it. This does not affect the Sainsbury's application."

ENDS

**Further Information**

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