



HARROGATE CIVIC SOCIETY

October 2009 Chairman's Report

Although it is little more than a month since the last Newsletter, your committee wanted to apprise you of the position the Society has taken on an important planning application - the proposal to build a TESCO Superstore on the site of the old gasworks on Skipton Road. We have, therefore, printed the complete text of our submission to the Council on the following three pages so you can follow the reasoning that lay behind the committee's final decision.

This has been a difficult application to determine because the Society had previously supported the building of a new major shopping facility in the north of the town. We thought this was required to counterbalance the present situation where existing supermarkets are either in the town centre or to the south. As you will see, we have on balance come down **against** the TESCO application - primarily on the grounds of increased traffic congestion in a part of Harrogate that already suffers significant traffic problems.

The Design Awards scheme is rapidly moving towards its climax. The assessors have made their final decisions as to which schemes merit an award, and the Mayor of Harrogate will announce the winners in the Sun Pavilion at 7.30pm on Wednesday 28th October. Refreshments will be served after the ceremony. There will be a limited number of seats available for members of the Society so, if you would like to attend, please contact the Secretary as soon as possible on (01423) 541069 or e-mail dutchbarn@aol.com.



We'll have a complete report on the result of this year's Awards scheme in the next newsletter but suffice it to say that the assessors were very impressed by the quality of the applicants, and we look forward to this scheme becoming a regular feature in the Society's year.

Two more dates for your diary:

Tuesday 20th October at 4pm

The third of this year's plaque unveiling ceremonies will be performed by the Mayor at Ascot House Hotel on Ripon Road to commemorate the noted inventor and philanthropist, WH Baxter. After the ceremony, refreshments will be served in the hotel. All members are welcome to attend.

Thursday 19th November at 7.30pm

A talk on the extraordinary life of the Titus Salt - politician, philanthropist, one of the most successful businessmen of the 19th century and creator of the model community of Saltaire - will be given by expert Maria Glot in the Herriott Room of Grants Hotel. An evening not to be missed!

Howard Hughes

Department of Development Services,
Harrogate Borough Council,
Knapping Mount,
Harrogate.

Dear Sir,

Planning Application 6.79.7518.C.FULMAJ 09/02704/FULMAJ
Gas Offices, Skipton Road, Harrogate (TESCO)

We divide our comment on the above application for a large supermarket on this site under three headings - History, Positive Aspects & Negative Aspects.

HISTORY

1.1 The last use of the site was for employment.

1.2. An application for a D.I.Y. store was refused in 1993 because of loss of employment land. Policies from the Harrogate & Knaresborough Local Plan were cited. EMP 1 - Policy for existing industrial and commercial areas, said in the justification that '*Existing industrial and commercial areas must continue in this use....*' The importance of maintaining employment use on land already in that use ,or last in that use, continues in the Core Strategy, Policy JB3 and saved HDLP Policy E2. A proposed new policy is currently in a period of consultation - Policy JB6: Protection and Enhancement of Existing Employment Areas.

1.3 SH1 - policy for new shopping development. This was a long policy with six criteria which I shall not repeat here, but criteria iv) included the wording '*...proposed shopping developments should not seriously affect the vitality and viability of existing shopping centres as a whole.*' Criterion v) said '*Other uses: there will be a presumption against shopping development proposed on land allocated in this local plan for other uses or which would conflict with policies R1 and EMP1 of this local plan.*'

Another reason relevant to the current application is that the DIY store was said to be over-development detrimental to residents. Interestingly, the size of the proposed DIY store was 3251 sq.m., - the currently proposed TESCO is considerably larger at 4038 sq.m. of retail floorspace.

1.4 An outline planning application in May 2001 for residential use (with a potential for 130 flats) was withdrawn. Although it was withdrawn, officer opinion was that the proposal should be refused. Reasons included the loss of an employment generating site contrary to HDLP Policy E2. This policy is reinforced by Core Strategy policy JB3 and proposed new policy JB6.

1.5 Saved policy E2 says that the loss of industrial/business land and premises to other uses will not be permitted unless such continued use would cause unacceptable planning problems. The Economic Development officer considered the gasworks site ideal for continued/renewed use for employment.

POSITIVE ASPECTS

2.1 We can see a need for a supermarket food store on the north side of Harrogate because at present almost all of the supermarkets - ASDA, WAITROSE, MORRISONS & SAINSBURYS are central to or eastwards of the town centre. We do now however have the ALDI store approved on Oak Beck Park, along with the Co-op store at Jennyfield, which satisfies some of the food retail need originating from the north and west of Harrogate.

2.2 The Core Strategy of the LDF at para 5.29 suggests that there is capacity for another main food store in Harrogate and that locating it on the north side offers the potential to reduce cross town traffic.

2.3 Care has been taken in the proposed design to protect the trees with TPO to the west on the boundary with Electric Avenue and on the east boundary along the Oak Beck where a boardwalk has been introduced. Planting has also been reinforced. Further protection of Electric Avenue from vehicle noise and fumes has been provided by a fence along the landscape buffer zone. This may incidentally protect the trees and other planting.

2.4 Various traffic measures have been provided, such as the new roundabout at the Skipton Road access and various other road improvements on Skipton Road. A second vehicular access point is provided on Ripon Road, thus spreading the traffic.

2.5 Pedestrian access is provided direct from Ripon Road and a pedestrian/cycleway off Electric Avenue. We note that no houses are to be demolished. The traffic lights on Ripon Road would presumably be phased or capable of pedestrian control to make crossing safer and easier.

2.6 The land lies at a low level and the building would not be unacceptably obtrusive, especially considering existing and proposed landscaping.

2.7 No petrol station is included, which avoids trips specifically for that reason.

2.8 We are always concerned about signage excesses. If the main advertisements on the building are to be confined to the two 'TESCO' signs, we applaud this restraint. Three main signs were indicated on the previous withdrawn application - the one proposed on the south elevation has been omitted.

2.9 We are pleased to see a re-cycling centre introduced, providing that noise is not created, especially at un-social hours that would adversely affect residents.

NEGATIVE ASPECTS

3.1 High volumes of traffic would be generated at the congested and difficult New Park roundabout. Minor improvements to this roundabout cannot negate the effect of traffic visiting a large supermarket. The new roundabout to serve TESCO is very close to the New Park roundabout, so that traffic travelling west will have only just moved off this roundabout to be stopped again - likewise, in reverse for traffic travelling east. The benefits of reduced traffic flows travelling east to Morrisons and Sainsburys or east and south to Asda or south to Waitrose must not be overplayed. Customers that may have used these existing supermarkets who come from points north and west of Harrogate will still have to arrive in the New Park area. Additional traffic will also arrive at the New Park roundabout because there are large residential areas to the east of the gas works site that lie nearer to it than to Asda, Morrisons or Sainsburys. There may be additional journeys to New Park by customers from the south for whom TESCO would be just as near as Asda or Waitrose, or some may simply change their allegiance! A café may be seen as a positive aspect but the café is likely to attract custom, and therefore traffic, separately from the retail business.

3.2 The new roundabout on Skipton Road is very near Electric Avenue (about 35/40 m. away) and Euclid Avenue. We expect that there will be some difficulty for vehicles turning right out of Electric Avenue and Euclid Avenue onto Skipton Road. Since application 'B' was on the table, a new food store has been given permission, namely ALDI, in part of the Focus building on Oakbeck Park. Increased traffic from this source will compound traffic conflict and congestion.

3.3 Extra traffic in the vicinity is bound to impact adversely on local residents, especially as the store will be open for 24 hours on some days and long hours on other days. Who knows how long it may be before opening 24/7 is requested? Turning right out of Kent Road, Coppice Drive and Duchy Road on to Ripon Road would become more difficult, as well as the difficulties for Electric Avenue and Euclid Avenue residents.

3.4 Referring again to para. 5.29 of the Core Strategy, it emphasises a capacity for additional **food retail** and that ‘*provision could be made for another main food store in Harrogate.....*’ A high percentage of comparison goods (33% in this application) would be wrong for this location, which should be concentrated in the town centre.

3.5 Para 5.28 of the Core Strategy says ‘*The Retail Capacity Study emphasises the importance of bringing forward additional retail development*’ (in Harrogate) ‘*to ensure its market share does not diminish.....*’ The paragraph notes that this expansion is most likely to take place in the West Park and Dragon Road/Bower Road areas of the town. We would add Station Parade, where retail is very likely to be included with a transport interchange. Other than for food stores, retail expansion is being directed largely to Harrogate town centre with some in Knaresborough and Ripon (see para 5.31 of the Core Strategy). This policy is important in order to ensure that the vitality and viability of our towns is maintained.

3.6 The existence of a large food store on the Gas Works site would inevitably adversely affect the Jennyfield Co-op Store. One aspect of the demise of the Co-op (if that were to happen) would be particularly unfortunate. We refer to the loss of the Post Office which is within the Co-op. Many Post Offices are being closed. The one on Jennyfield has a good catchment area and deserves to survive. The Co-op also houses a pharmacy. Such local stores are valuable community assets.

3.7 The design is very simplistic. Only the roof curving down towards Electric Avenue gives any relief from the mainly glass and larch rectangles. The stone feature panel on the east elevation does not unfortunately introduce much interest, but having the pedestrian bridge link entrance now passing through it in the current design is a minor improvement.

CONCLUSIONS

A change of use of the site from employment land has always been contrary to policy.

Additional food retail on the north side of Harrogate is appropriate, but ALDI has been approved on Oak Beck Park.

A large floor space devoted to comparison goods is inappropriate.

There will be additional traffic from all directions towards New Park including on Skipton Road eastwards of New Park, from the Knox, Bilton and Woodfield areas. The two access points and various road improvements cannot negate the traffic congestion that will result.

Pedestrians’ needs have been taken into account, but most shoppers will arrive by car.

The layout and attention to landscaping has been well considered.

The Jennyfield Co-op with a Post Office and a Pharmacy would undoubtedly suffer.

The design of the supermarket is basic, but not highly visible.

A high volume of traffic in the New Park area that cannot be accommodated satisfactorily is reason enough in itself to refuse the application. Additional reasons for refusal include damage to town centre and other retail outlets and an adverse effect on amenity for local residents. From the Council’s point of view, loss of employment land is another important factor.

We recommend refusal of the application.

Yours faithfully,

Henry Pankhurst

Vice Chairman