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Our ref : S 04/1239

Your ref :S2004/1239

1st February, 2005

Dear Mr. Pizzey,

**Proposed extension to Tesco superstore, Bourne Way, Salisbury.**

Thank you for consulting me on the above application.

**Context for these comments**

Whilst I have a copy of the original Retail & Planning assessment submitted by the applicant's consultant (DDP), I am not in possession of all the technical data that has since been generated regarding the proposal and retail provision in Salisbury. Consequently, it would not be proper for me to attempt to give full consideration to matters of retail impact. It is, nevertheless, possible to forward comments from a general strategic retail policy context that I hope will be of use to you.

**The Proposal**

I note from the DDP assessment that, amongst other things, the proposal will add 1,175 sq. metres of sales floorspace (excluding café) to the existing sales area of 4,469 sq. metres; an increase of over 26%. Also, that it is anticipated that 850 sq. metres of the additional sales floorspace will be attributed to convenience goods while 325 sq. metres will provide for comparison goods.

**Other Proposals / Material considerations**

I am aware that a proposal to replace the existing Sainsbury's town centre supermarket at The Maltings with a larger store was approved in July of last year.

You have informed me that the previous proposal for an Asda store at Bishopdown is no longer being pursued.

I am aware that a certificate of lawfulness has been granted in respect of a mezzanine floor at the Tesco store. Further, that plans have been produced to show how the full amount of floorspace proposed in the current application might be implemented at mezzanine level.



## Consideration of the proposal

### Need and the sequential test

Dealing first with the **sequential test**; your retail consultant has commented that *“The extent to which [the Sainsbury proposal] provides a valid basis for rejecting the proposed [Tesco] extension depends on whether the Council is satisfied that The Maltings redevelopment represents a suitable and viable opportunity which may be regarded as being available within a reasonable timescale.”* I fully endorse that view.

In accordance with current retail guidance and policy, the opportunity to implement the town centre Sainsbury’s proposal must not be lost. However, its implementation does not appear to be imminent. So it would seem to be at least a few years before such provision would be available. As indicated above, I am not in a position to comment fully on need. But I have no doubt that at least some need exists. Also, I have no doubt that at least some over-trading is occurring (although I suspect not to the degree referred to in the original DDP assessment). Thus, providing that the Sainsbury’s proposal is not prevented or unduly inhibited, then, depending on the current level of established **need**, there could well be a case for the proposed extension that does not conflict with the **sequential test**.

On the other hand, if established need falls well short of the cumulative turnover of both proposals over the next few years (say within the local plan period), then the proposal would have failed to cross the first hurdle of **need** and the question of the **sequential test** should not even arise. DDP consider that there is sufficient need for both proposals. However, from the information that I have at my disposal, it is certainly not clear that your consultant shares that view.

### Retail impact

Retail impact is tied to detail considerations of turnover and need. Consequently, I do not propose to comment on the matter other than to ‘flag up’ the ‘cause and affect’ relationship between retail impact and a previous point concerning the potential prevention or undue inhibition of the Sainsbury’s proposal.

### Mezzanine floor

As you are all too well aware, implementation of a mezzanine floor of similar size to the current proposal would circumvent any considerations of policy, need, retail impact and the sequential test as set out above. Clearly, such a proposal is not an ideal solution to the provision of more floorspace; otherwise we would not be faced with the current application. Obviously, such a proposal carries with it many disadvantages including disruption during implementation, less flexible layout, inefficiencies of stock handling and a less attractive shopping experience where the mezzanine floor imposes a much lower ground floor to ceiling height. The latter point would seem of particular relevance where such a large proportion of the store is to be affected in this way. I therefore have my doubts as to whether any mezzanine floor would extend much beyond making a feature of an over-looking café / restaurant (as is currently in the course of insertion into Tesco’s Eastville, Bristol store for example). On the other hand, the possibility of a large mezzanine floor has to be acknowledged.

It is my understanding that the existing store is not conditioned to primarily convenience goods floorspace. Consequently, approval of the current application offers the future ability to control type of goods in addition to amount of floorspace (see footnote).

## **Conclusion**

Clearly, this matter is finely balanced with various material considerations having the potential to over-ride the straight-forward implementation of retail planning policy. In these circumstances and given only limited involvement in the matter, I would not presume to recommend a specific course of action.

Thus, on behalf of the County Council:

providing that you are satisfied that the Sainsbury's proposal will not be prevented or unduly inhibited by the current proposal;

then:

no strategic retail objection is made to the proposal with the intent that this will enable a balanced decision to be made having regard to both overall planning policy and local material considerations.

## **Caveat**

This report is based on an assessment of the proposal and the context of other proposals as described above. Any change in the information available, the proposals, the existing pattern of trading in the area or the emergence of other proposals could lead to a need to re assess the comments set out above

## **Footnote**

I have enclosed some details regarding conditions relating to the proportion of convenience and comparison goods. Based on experience elsewhere in the County, can I commend the practice of the 'Hatfield Inspector' in conditioning the overall sales floorspace of the store rather than relying on the submitted plans. Otherwise, there is a danger that more sales floorspace could be freed up from the bulk storage areas.

Yours sincerely,

W. D. Rapley  
Strategic and Countryside Planning Manager.