

A MONSTER

Bosses reveal plans won't be scaled down

MILNGAVIE could still be in line for a monster new Tesco store - as the supermarket giant admitted it has not given up its ambitions for a huge redevelopment.

In a heated meeting between the multinational and community campaigners, superstore bosses said they have NOT scaled back their plans for the town.

This is despite their previous proposal - for a two storey shop and car park - being knocked back by East Dunbartonshire Council and the Scottish Government.

Tesco were forced back to the drawing board when a Holyrood official blocked their plans - which campaigners said was too big for Milngavie and would suck the life out of the town centre.

Shocked

It will submit a new application for permission to redevelop its Gavin's Mill store in the autumn - and it had been expected that the chastened chain store would scale back its ambitions.

But campaigners were shocked to hear that the size of the development is "unlikely" to change.

The comments were made at a meeting between Tesco and its design team and a coalition of community groups, comprising community councils, residents' associations, traders and activists from We Like Milngavie, a body which was set up to oppose the expansion.

At the meeting - which

Report: GRAHAM MARTIN

the superstore was compelled to hold as part of a compulsory consultation process after its government knockback - community groups were shocked to be told by Phil Pritchett, of Pritchett Planning, who act for Tesco, that they can "make detailed comment on the design of any new proposals", but that the size would remain the same.

Minutes of the meeting, seen by the Herald, show Lindsay Manson from Manson Architects say that the "size of the new store would likely be as previously given."

Records show that he "mentioned that the costs of upgrade and modernisation would be such that any new store would have to be large enough to increase turnover to pay for this."

There was astonishment among the community representatives gathered, and the minutes show Keith Small, from Bearsden North Community Council, expressing the "disquiet the community feels at the apparent unwillingness of Tesco to change its brief on the proposed

TESCO

BID IS BACK

size of a modernised store." He asked that "the Tesco board do not alienate the local community and accept a longer period for a return on their investment for a modernised Milngavie Tesco."

Following the meeting, We Like Milngavie released a statement, published on our letters page this week.

Rejected

The group's Eve Gilmore said: "It became very clear to the meeting that Tesco have not changed their brief to their design team. Tesco still want to go ahead with a monster store; a Tesco Extra the same size as that previously rejected for the heart of Milngavie."

"The community groups all condemned this. They demanded the Tesco design team convey their abhorrence of such a monster store to Tesco's decision makers. These decision makers have not, to date, engaged directly with Milngavie and Bearsden public. The community representatives also pointed out

to Tesco that the local public are also in the main Tesco's own customers.

"They asked Tesco to listen to the wishes of the local community. Those present said: 'YES to sensible modernisation, NO to a monster.'"

Milngavie MSP Gil Paterson warned that the community will have a "big fight on its hands" to stop Tesco getting their own way in the town.

He said: "Despite all Tesco's pronouncements about taking account of the community's wishes, I fear they will tinker at the edges of their previous plan and will stop at nothing to get their way."

"They have a track record of putting their bank balance over what is best for the local area and will push ahead with the expansion they want, regardless of the consequences to local traders and the environment."

"Community groups will have to fight hard to persuade them

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not to build what would be, in effect, a retail factory among a restricted space, next to a listed building and a busy shopping precinct which is the heart of Milngavie's community.

"Every detail of Tesco's revised plan must be scrutinised carefully to ensure that it meets the needs of the community."

Gloria Coats, corporate affairs manager for Tesco, said: "We had the opportunity to discuss our Tesco store in Milngavie with representatives from a number of Milngavie community groups. The feedback that we received was instrumental in highlighting key issues to take into account whilst developing our new proposals.

"We will now be looking to undertake a number of initiatives throughout the coming months to ensure that we can consult with the wider Milngavie community, continue to gauge local opinion, and bring forward plans that are right for Milngavie.

Exhibition

"Following this activity, we're planning to hold our public consultation exhibition in late August after the school holidays so the wider community have the opportunity to see the progress of this consultation.

"In the meantime I would encourage people who would like to become actively involved in the consultation process to contact me directly. I look forward to hearing people's thoughts on our existing town centre store and what they would like from a new Tesco store in Milngavie.

"I would like to reassure local people that we remain committed to investing in Milngavie, creating new jobs and delivering the modern shopping experience that customers tell us they want while keeping people shopping locally."

Members of the public can contact Mrs Coats on 0845 521 8425 or tesco@communityline.org

SEE full We Like Milngavie letter on page 4 along with other views and also more letters on page 12.