

We Like Milngavie

We Like Milngavie Comments on Tesco's Response to Community Consultation

Dear Ms Coats,

June 27th 2012

With regard to Tesco's previous application, the community's concerns included:

1. The **size** of the development.

The description "re-development" was inappropriate for this application. The proposal was for the replacement of a foodstore with something completely different - a Tesco Extra. Such a development would seek to replicate the various functions of the original town centre on the other side of the by-pass. It would result in a shift of the centre of gravity of the town away from the precinct to the store.

Because the site is in effect an edge-of-centre site, dislocated from the original town centre by distance, level and the by-pass, the impact of a proposal such as this on the designated prime shopping area would have been substantial.

(Updating to the present, the impact would be greatly increased due to the economic downturn - people have less time and money to spend on shopping).

2. The **layout** of the proposal, which constituted very poor design in the following respects:

a. The location of the store on the existing car park, with its back to the town centre and the only entrance on the far side. This would further dislocate the two sides of the centre, thus amplifying the potential to 'capture' customers.

We note that East Renfrew Council has produced a planning brief for a supermarket within Barrhead town centre. This specifies that the entrance and active frontage be orientated *towards* the town's Main Street.

b. The intrusion of an extremely large building at this central location, where it would detrimentally impact the landscape and townscape of Milngavie by blocking views across the valley in all directions, including from and towards the conservation area. The existing building is cut into the hillside.

c. The insensitive location of the massive store building on the car park site, where it would dominate Gavin's Mill and block its open aspect as well as that of the conservation area.

d. The insensitive location of the service area immediately adjoining the fish ladder and the regionally important Allander Way: the high wall and screen necessitated by this layout would put this unique area in shadow and make it feel unsafe.

e. The insensitive location of a large open-topped decked car park, with its lighting columns, next to Lennox Park. Besides the park, this would visually impact the residential areas on higher ground on each side.

f. The replacement of virtually all the greenspace within the site with built development. The wooded setting of Gavin's Mill, and parkland setting of the wider conservation area, would be destroyed. The river would be squeezed between decked car park and store building.

g. The extreme overdevelopment of the site. Fitting a quart into a pint pot in this way would result in major detractions from the public realm. It does not even leave room for My Bus, used by elderly and disabled people, to stop near the store entrance.

We note that the Scottish Government is committed to high quality placemaking, and will publish a new Policy for Architecture and Placemaking later this year.

The new application

Shortly after dismissal of their first application on appeal last year, Tesco announced their intention to build "a store that's right for Milngavie". We consulted the surrounding communities regarding their views on appropriate development of the Tesco store within Milngavie town centre. A major outcome was the strongly held and unanimous view that the layout previously proposed was fundamentally wrong. For many, this was even more important an issue than the size of the store. Our initial consultation with the community led to the document "A store that's right for Milngavie" which was presented to Tesco at the meeting with community groups on 26th May last year.

In September we consulted the highly regarded masterplanning experts Page\Park Architects, who undertook a holistic appraisal of Milngavie town centre. They commented that, since there was no masterplan or framework to guide development in Milngavie, Tesco "have been able to come in with their large store and place it as they see fit with limited regard to its context - landscape, urban setting, townscape and public realm issues have all been secondary, if considered at all". Independently Page\Park came to the conclusion that, to integrate successfully with the town centre in Milngavie, the superstore would need to remain south of the river.

Based on government policy set out in Designing Places, Page\Park developed a vision for Milngavie which has provided inspiration for the community. Their framework connects and unifies the two sides of the centre, with a strong emphasis on the river and the public realm. It provides solutions to the centre's problems while building on its assets. Importantly, the framework provides a context for development which would avoid the significant detrimental impacts of Tesco's original application (see concerns 2a – 2g above).

The architects argue that any development proposals within the town centre should place the needs, sustainability and improvement of the wider town centre ahead of isolated development thinking.

With David Page, representatives of We Like Milngavie and Milngavie Community Council presented Page\Park's report to members of Tesco's team on 10 February, 2012. The potential for using the existing location for the store building was discussed. We considered that a very large store could be accommodated south of the river, with two floors of store above ground level parking. There is further space to the north east which could be used for store or parking uses, ideally fronted by separate units on to the public realm at ground level.

We pointed out that the advantages of retaining the character and identity of Milngavie, and its quality of place, would in the long-term benefit Tesco as well as everyone else, especially with the rise of internet shopping.

WLM and MCC were assured that Page\Park's report would be discussed with Tesco's other team members and that we would receive comments. Despite repeated requests for feedback, and for further engagement, we have received nothing.

Tesco makes much of the fact that Scottish Planning Policy promotes development within town centres, as opposed to out-of-centre locations. We fully support this policy. But this does not give Tesco a *carte blanche*. SPP also makes very clear that, when developing in town centres, developers and owners must adapt their proposals so as to fit that particular centre and to integrate with it successfully. SPP stresses that improving the town centre as a whole should be a priority for development.

Now, having viewed the exhibition, all our fundamental concerns, as listed above, remain. It is extremely disappointing that Tesco have simply ridden rough-shod over the communities of a wide area - their customers. Rather than meaningfully adapting their proposed store to suit its host town centre, they prefer instead to irreversibly degrade our heritage and landscape, and to put our traders out of business.

If such a proposal is granted and implemented, the community's vision of making Milngavie town centre a uniquely attractive place will have been a passing dream.

Yours sincerely,

Eve Gilmore

Secretary
We Like Milngavie

Cc Thomas Glen, and Milngavie and Bearsden Councillors

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