

We Like Milngavie: Briefing Note on Milngavie Tesco Proposals

“We Like Milngavie” (WLM) is a community group formed in January 2010 to oppose Tesco’s first application to build a new, much larger store in the car park of its current one. This would have given Milngavie a store on a scale that is unwanted by the vast majority of local residents. Located beside two listed buildings and adjacent to a conservation area, its design was intrusive and unsympathetic to the leafy, village location. The Allander Water and Allander Way, which run through the site, would also have been affected. The store’s size posed a major threat to the future viability of shops in Milngavie and Bearsden, especially as it would no longer be predominantly a food store, but would sell a wide range of goods and services.

Built over the current supermarket car park, this completely new, huge store would have occupied a much more prominent location, at a higher position, facing away from the precinct and with its rear along Woodburn Way. (See the aerial views in Figures 1 and 2). Tesco were proposing to more than double the trading floor area and to increase the building volume by 4.5 times, in a structure up to four storeys high in places and including undercroft and decked car parks. Around 150 mature trees would have been lost from the congested and constrained 6.1 acre site.

The Facts about the Scale of the refused Tesco

- Of the 25 Tesco Extras in Scotland, only Irvine New Town would have been larger.
- The Milngavie Tesco Extra, with 10,200 sqm gross floorspace, would have been significantly larger than the Maryhill Tesco Extra, (8260 sqm).
- The current proposed Morrison’s store in Bishopbriggs is only 5900sqm.
- Tesco estimated that the new store would take 85% of retail expenditure in Milngavie. Virtually none of this would re-circulate in the area.

This proposal was subject to a Planning Application lodged in July 2009 that was subsequently refused by East Dunbartonshire Council in April 2010 with six reasons for refusal. These comprised its intrusive scale and massing, its adverse impact on the setting and character of the Conservation area and the setting of Gavin’s Mill, its adverse impact on the vitality and viability of Milngavie and Bearsden Town Centres and its being detrimental to the traffic network.

Tesco lodged a Planning Appeal in July 2010 which was heard at an Inquiry and Hearing in early February 2011. The Reporter dismissed the Appeal for these reasons:

- The adverse impact on the setting of the listed Gavin’s Mill due to the scale of the building in relation to that of the mill.
- The adverse impact on the Conservation Area at Gavin’s Mill due to the loss of its open aspect.
- Deficiencies in the design of the frontage on Woodburn Way.

The Community Response

- The initial proposal attracted 700 written objections from local residents, community organisations and businesses.
- The community opposition at the Appeal was led by lawyers and other experts acting for the Councillors, Milngavie Community Council and WLM.
- The following organisations have also supported the opposition:

Bearsden North Community Council
Bearsden West Community Council
Bearsden East Community Council
Strathblane Community Council
Bishopbriggs Community Council
Mains Estate Residents Association
Burnbrae Residents Association
Baljaffray Residents Association

Killermont Residents Association
Mosshead Residents Association
Milngavie Civic Trust
Milngavie History & Heritage Group
Milngavie Heritage Centre Group
Milngavie in Bloom
Bearsden and Milngavie Ramblers
Milngavie Traders Association
BIDS group

- WLM is a fully constituted organisation with a nine strong committee and over 1,000 supporters. It raised over £12,000 from over 220 local contributors as a Fighting Fund initially to employ specialists (Land Use Consultants) at the Appeal, and later, architects/planners (Page/Park).

Tesco's New Proposed Planning Application

Tesco subsequently announced they intended returning with a revised proposal. In a press release they said they would provide "a store that's right for Milngavie". Reflecting the views of the community at large, WLM is not opposed to an appropriate form of rebuilding, expansion or refurbishment. A consensus community view rapidly emerged, which was expressed in the document "A Store that's Right for Milngavie" -- available on WLM website -- see below. This was presented to Tesco at a meeting they had arranged with community groups in May 2011. The key points of this document were an enlargement of the existing store up to a 25% increase in floor area and modernisation of the existing store, or a new store located in the present position, set low beside the river.

We now await Tesco's new application. Regrettably they seem intent on ignoring the key objections of local residents: the vastly increased size of the store and its relocation onto the car park. Tesco are proposing mainly cosmetic modifications to the store that was refused. Local people feel its size remains grossly excessive for the needs of the area. Moreover relocating the store so that its long, lifeless rear wall is directly on Woodburn Way, but with no entrance on this side, will give a closed-in feel to the village which currently looks out over the Allander Valley. This will also discourage visits between store and precinct.

Tesco has undertaken a pre-application consultation involving meetings with groups and an exhibition at the end of June 2012 in Milngavie. From the views expressed to WLM, concerns have been raised on a number of issues:

- Unproven demand for a retail development of this size in a village that is already well served by a variety of shops.

- Effect on local shops in Milngavie Pedestrian Precinct
- Over-stated and unproven claims regarding job creation
- Environmental effects including tree loss, river canalisation, disruption to flora and fauna
- Traffic congestion within the site and on surrounding roads
- Visual impact adjacent to the Conservation Area (including listed buildings) and the historic heart of the village
- Detriment to the Allander Way and the fish ladder area.
- Gross over-development of a tight, constrained and sensitive site

A Vision for the Community

When it became clear that Tesco was not going to change its approach, WLM raised a further £3000 from Milngavie Community Council, local residents and businesses to commission Page\Park, one of the leading architectural practices in Scotland, to develop an Outline Urban Design Framework for the future sustainable development of Milngavie Town Centre. Entitled 'A Vision for the Community' this Framework looks at the future of the Town Centre as a whole, including both the Tesco site and the Precinct -- available on WLM website -- see below.

The Design Framework has been presented to Councillors, businesses and community organisations. It has been endorsed by all the community councils, residents' associations, amenity and heritage groups in Milngavie and Bearsden.

We believe this alternative vision for Milngavie, which safeguards and enhances the integrity of the town centre, could be used by East Dunbartonshire Council as a basis for the development of a Master Plan for Milngavie in conjunction with the community. Such a plan would provide an agreed and common framework to guide developers, such as Tesco, and so give a proper balance between the community and business interest for the future development of Milngavie Town Centre. We are confident that this is what local people want.

We Like Milngavie's view of the Tesco proposal is well summarised by East Dunbartonshire Council's closing statement to the Public Inquiry - "The proposal is vast and in the view of many who gave evidence at this enquiry, would lead to Milngavie losing its identity and simply becoming another Tesco town."

You can contact us on admin@welikemilngavie.org

For further information please see documents below:

Preliminary Appraisal of Townscape & Visual Impacts (Land Use Consultants)
<http://www.welikemilngavie.org/luc.pdf>

A Store That's Right For Milngavie
<http://www.welikemilngavie.org/rightstore4.pdf>

"Milngavie Town Centre: A Vision for the Community" (Page/Park)
<http://www.welikemilngavie.org/pp.html>

Robin M Brown, Chairman, We Like Milngavie

November 2012

Figure 1

Aerial view of existing Milngavie Town Centre

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Red dot: Gavin's Mill



Figure 2

Town Centre with Tesco's 2009 proposal

Sole entrance to store faces the decked car park



Figure 3

Loosely based on the Outline Design Framework

Integrates the two sides of the enlarged Town Centre with strong focus on the river.

Grey: indicative of preferred site south of the river for a superstore (possibly expanded and with integral parking).

For details:

www.welikemilngavie.org/pp.html

