

Planning Appeal - PPA-200-2008 Tesco Stores Ltd, 7 Gavins Mill Road, Milngavie

We Like Milngavie and Milngavie Community Council

Inquiry Statement: Retail

1. It has been agreed between the parties that the main planning policies on retail development relevant to this proposal are the Local Plan Policy RET 2 (2005) and Schedule 6(c) provisions within the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Joint Structure Plan (2008). Both are central to the case for objection to this proposal.
2. The relevant parts of Policy RET 2 to this part of the Appeal Inquiry are:
“Shopping provision within East Dunbartonshire will be enhanced, by encouraging and supporting retail development within existing shopping centres (town, village and local) and other established retail locations, as long as it can be demonstrated to:
a) Sustain or enhance the range or quality of shopping provision and the vitality and viability of the centres;
b) Be in keeping with the scale and character of the centre;
c) Not harm the amenity of the area;
d) Be readily accessible by public transport, bicycle or on foot as well as by car; and
e) Meet other relevant planning criteria”.
3. We have already argued that this proposal is contrary to items c), d) & e) in the Hearing Statement. Our Written Statement for this part of the Inquiry covers a) and b) and the three points below.

The proposal is not in keeping with the scale and character of Milngavie town centre

4. Milngavie is a local centre in the regional hierarchy of centres, serving primarily the local community of around 13000 people for most convenience and some comparison shopping.
5. Currently the Tesco store has 40% of the total floor space of the town centre and this will jump to 55% with the new store and probably breach the Competition Commission Competition Test.
6. We will argue that the scale of this proposal is excessive in giving rise to a major change in the character of the town centre and further reinforcing the domination of one retail supplier. Milngavie could be labelled ‘Tesco Town,’ which would detract from its image of a ‘village’ and a high quality environment for existing and potential residents and visitors.

The proposal will seriously threaten the vitality and viability of Milngavie and Bearsden Town Centres

7. We will argue that there is no demonstrable need for this scale of development and it will provide unfair competition to local retailers, leading to a decline in the quality of shopping within the Milngavie Precinct and Bearsden and in their roles as a focus for community activities.
8. **Capacity:** Owing to the size of the proposal, the Structure Plan requires it to be assessed by the appropriate criteria listed under Schedule 6(c)(i) 'Assessment of Significant Retail Development Proposals'. This involves considering capacity and assessing the impact on the Milngavie and Bearsden town centres. The impact analyses were not done for the planning application. However this has now been received for Milngavie, although too late (8th December) for assessment or comment for this Statement.
9. On capacity, the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Joint Structure Plan (GCVJSP) concluded there was no convenience requirement for Milngavie Town Centre, but it did make a 6000sq.m gross floorspace allocation for comparison within the Milngavie/Bearsden catchment up to 2011. Only about 2000sqm currently remains, and consequently this proposal for 5000sqm is a departure from the GCVJSP under Strategic Policy 9.
10. The Milngavie store was intended as a food store, and is currently classed as a convenience store in the East Dunbartonshire Retail Capacity Study (EDRCS). However we have estimated that roughly 1500sqm is being used for comparison goods, in breach of planning conditions. Nevertheless, to accord with the GCVJSP, no more than a total of 2000sqm gross floorspace within the proposed store may be used for comparison goods.
11. The departure can only be justified under Strategic Policy 10 in terms of the contribution made to remedying any qualitative deficiencies in existing provision (A (iv)) or through the protection of existing jobs or the creation of a significant number of net additional permanent jobs (B(i)(b)).
12. We will argue that the Planning Authority misrepresented qualitative deficiency in its Development Quality Report and the claims on job creation made by the Appellant are questionable and on both counts there is no case to be made to justify the departure.
13. **Future Capacity:** The GCVJSP capacity figures relate to 2011. It has been agreed between all parties that 2015 should be adopted for projection purposes. It has also been agreed to use the EDRCS for this purpose and take account of the most recent retail capacity studies for the forthcoming preparation of the new regional Strategic Development Plan. For comparison purposes, the EDRCS covers all of EDC and consequently it is desirable to extract the relevant data if possible for Milngavie & Bearsden. The feasibility of this is awaited.
14. We will argue that, when current developments in the pipeline are taken into account, there is insufficient capacity to justify this proposal under the GCVJSP and nor is there sufficient to justify it for 2015. This proposal is simply too big.

15. **A new direction from past experience?** We will highlight the ongoing vulnerability of the Precinct ever since Wm Low moved to the existing Tesco site in 1992 and the decline of the independents, with supporting references from:
- Past studies on Milngavie Town Centre by CRGP
 - The Tesco planning applications for the extension and deletion of conditions, post 2001
 - The RCS and any new data arising from current work on the Centres by the other parties
 - Competition Commission Report on the Grocery sector, as an example of the current 'direction of travel' of thinking on planning policy
 - The concept of the 'clone town centre' and the position of Milngavie
16. We will stress the importance of the independents as they tend to provide the energy in feeding town centre vitality and leadership, and retain local spend at a far higher rate than the national or regional based stores.
17. We will argue that the impact of the new store will not bring the benefits the Appellants suggest – that it is likely to lead to a decrease in footfall in the Precinct through greater disincentives to undertake linked trips. We will also argue that the recent material provided to WLM from the 'linked trip' surveys undertaken by the Appellants do not provide any further illumination on this issue for the new store.
18. We will challenge the claims of the Appellant on the benefits to the town centre arising from this proposal and the assumption that, as the proposal lies in the town centre, the vitality and viability of the Precinct is not a planning consideration.

This Proposal will not sustain or enhance the range or quality of shopping provision within the Precinct

19. As well as the likelihood of a decrease in total footfall, we will also argue there is the threat of reduced expenditure within specific types of shops and services arising from increased and unfair competition from the enlarged store. We could lose specialised and valued shops and services, including for example the post office, pharmacies and the bookshop which would seriously threaten the future well being of the Precinct as a shopping and community resource.
20. The Appellant has indicated in the Supporting Information to the planning application that these types of specific services will not be provided. However, this provides no guarantee for such a provision in the future as no planning consent would be required.
21. Overall, we will argue that the Appellant has not demonstrated that its proposal will sustain or enhance the range or quality of shopping provision and the vitality and viability of the centre and nor will it be in keeping with the scale and character of the centre.

List of Documents

Glasgow and Clyde Valley Joint Structure Plan: 2006
East Dunbartonshire Local Plan: 2005
Glasgow and Clyde Valley Strategic Development Plan: Main Issues Report and Background Report 11 (Retail)
East Dunbartonshire Retail Capacity Study: 2009
SPP8 Town Centres and Retailing: 2006
Scottish Planning Policy 2010

Milngavie Town Centre Study, Phase 2, CRGP 1992 (extract)
Clone Town Britain, 2005, new economics foundation
Plugging the Leaks, new economics foundation
Competition Commission News Release, Competition Test, October 2009
Tesco and Employment in Small Towns: July 2010 Richard Stankiewicz MA.
Planning Reports:
TP/ED/01/0042 Deletion of condition 8 of P/BM/88/330
TP/ED/01/0053 Deletion of condition 3 of TP/ED/99/330
TP/ED/01/0863 Non food retail unit at 111 – 115 Main St, Milngavie.
TP/ED/09/0395 Mixed use development at Bishopbriggs Town Centre.
Linked Trips Feasibility Report, WLM 2010

Witnesses

1. Peter Swinson BSc MSc MRTPI. His two degrees cover Geography and Economics and Urban and Regional Planning respectively. He has been a resident of Milngavie for 30 years. He worked as a town planner in his early career and then for 23 years as a social and economic development professional for the Scottish Development Agency and Scottish Enterprise, rising to Senior Director. For the past 12 years he has run his own economic development consultancy business, primarily in Eastern Europe.
2. Rona Miller has an art gallery business - the Art Forum - within Milngavie Precinct. She has been an independent trader there for 18 years and has been a leading player in many business and community initiatives over the years, including membership of the Community Council and the Milngavie Book and Arts Festival.
3. Grahame Lawson has 36 years local authority experience in the field of transportation and is a Fellow of the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation. From 1996 to 2004, he was Head of Planning, Transportation and Building Standards in North Lanarkshire Council. Prior to this, he was with Strathclyde Regional Council for 21 years, latterly as Chief Engineer in charge of transport planning and all transport modelling. He was intimately involved in the development of the use of the Transyt computer program in the early 1970s and used Transyt throughout his professional career. For the last 14 years he has been an adviser to Government on transport issues as they relate to the interests of disabled people. He has been a resident of Milngavie since 1975.