

Planning Department  
Winchester City Council  
City Offices  
Colebrook Street  
Winchester  
Hampshire  
SO23 9LJ

August 5<sup>th</sup> 2010

**Address: Abbey Mill Business Site, Station Road, Bishops Waltham,  
Hampshire, SO32 1DH  
Planning reference: 10 / 01650 / FUL**

Dear Sir/Madam

I object to this planning application on the following grounds:

### **1. Inappropriate Use**

I object on the grounds that the proposal is totally at odds with the allocated use for the Abbey Mill site under the Winchester District Local Plan.

In Chapter 13 'Settlements', paragraph 13.8 is quite specific: "The area offers an opportunity for significant redevelopment for mixed residential and employment uses, which will be encouraged so as to improve the environment and economic prosperity of the area." This leads directly to Policy S.3 which states: "Mixed employment and residential development will be permitted on 1.9 hectares of land at Abbey Mill, Bishops Waltham provided that:

- (i) employment uses [Use Classes B1 (Business), B2 (General Industry), or B8 (Storage and Distribution)] constitute the majority of floorspace on the site and are integrated well with adjoining housing. A reduced level of employment provision may be accepted if it is necessitated by constraints and the need to achieve viable development which meets other requirements of the plan."

I note that there is absolutely no reference whatsoever to retail use (A1- Shops). I also note that the requirement for mixed use specifies, quite clearly, residential and business use. In order for this allocated use to be changed, there is a need for clear, material considerations being proven for such a change. I cannot see that such convincing material considerations have been put forward.

It was entirely serendipitous, from Sainsbury's point of view, that the arrival of a global recession forced the company with planning permission for 70 residences, new offices and workshops, to sell them the site. Under no circumstances does this give Sainsbury's the right to arbitrarily change the allocated use of the site, nor for Winchester City Council to uniquely decide to revoke the clearly allocated use in its only existing, still relevant, plan.

## 2. Design

I wish to object to the planning application for a Sainsbury's superstore, as referred to above, on the following material considerations based on the Design and Development Principles in Chapter 3 of the Winchester District Local Plan (WDLP).

The plan clearly states that there is a need for any proposed development to "fully reflect and respond to the existing townscape and landscape character of each locality" [chapter 3, paragraph 3.4, bullet point 3].

Further, as part of the design and development principles, the plan says that "Matters of design and layout should be informed by the broader context, which includes all aspects of townscape and landscape, from both the public and private domains." It also specifically states that "locally prevalent design details, materials, construction techniques and traditions, are all elements that combine to create and enhance local townscapes and landscapes. These, in turn, help to underpin the character, distinctiveness and vitality of the District's settlements" – such as Bishops Waltham [chapter 3, paragraph 3.9].

All this reflects the findings of the Winchester District Landscape Character Assessment which was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance and published in March 2004. This in turn reflected a change in approach to landscape policy that was evident in the Hampshire County Structure Plan (Review) (HCC, 2000). Landscape character assessment formed an integral part of that review and was fundamental to the formation of policy guidance. As opposed to the 1994 Structure Plan, the 2000 Review policies refer to the need to protect landscape character and respect sense of place, scenic quality, sense of remoteness, historic landscapes, and the setting of settlements. This is particularly evident in Policy E6.

When the Winchester District Landscape Character Assessment was undertaken, the Bishops Waltham Society asked for an 'Upper Hamble Landscape Character Area' – that would have specifically included the Abbey Mill site – to be undertaken. But, as the Assessment states, it was felt that "Key Characteristics and Strategies for a proposed 'Upper Hamble Valley' area would also be too similar to those of the Durley Claylands Character Area to warrant a separate character area".

This is relevant because the Durley Claylands Landscape Character Area provides planning guidance on 'Built Form' development [chapter 4, section 4.23, page 164]. It states that one of the strategies should be to:

"Conserve and promote the use of traditional building materials such as red brick, painted brick, vitrified brick, clay tiles and slate in any new development."

This is in line with the overall objectives of the Winchester District Landscape Character Assessment's objectives for the historic environment which are to:

- "Conserve and enhance buildings and boundaries that are constructed using building materials and construction methods common to the settlement type or landscape character area.

- Encourage the use and production of locally distinct materials such as bricks, tiles, flintwork, British slate, long straw and, therefore, encourage the cultivation of suitable wheat for thatching.
- Where new development takes place, ensure that it respects the surrounding building materials and construction methods typical of the location, seeking inspiration from them wherever possible, without resorting to 'pastiche' solutions."

Please note the particular use of the word 'pastiche' which I will return to later.

Given the above strictures, it is understandable that the plans originally put forward by James Duke & Co Ltd in 2007 were accepted, because the plans stated that construction, including the front of the proposed Station Road office buildings [B1 use] was to be brick with some timber cladding, under clay tile and natural slate roofs. This was in keeping with the locally prevalent style as itemised above.

That this was important was clearly underlined in the letter from Neil Mackintosh, Principal Planning Officer at Winchester City Council, to David Wilson Homes on 18 June 2008 [WCC ref W00590/23]. In this letter, Mr Mackintosh states that:

"The Abbey Mill site is quite prominent when viewed across the Pond and is adjacent to the Bishops Waltham Conservation Area and Bishops Palace. This was recognised by PLB [David Wilson Homes' architects] when they submitted the planning application and assurances were given that indigenous materials would be used. Although the actual materials were not specified the application stated that brick and timber would be appropriate, under clay tile and natural slate roofs. I feel that the quality of the materials that you have submitted so far is quite poor and that they will not enhance this important site."

Sainsbury's plans are however radically different. Its initial plans were for a typical Superstore shed, with an arched roof and deeply uninteresting elevations. Winchester City Council planners should be congratulated for involving Think Place in trying to come up with some logic for a change in Sainsbury's architect's mindless replication of stores elsewhere in the country. That is not to say that the new architect's plans are acceptable, merely interestingly different.

Instead of locally distinct materials such as "bricks, tiles, flintwork and British slate", the current design uses large areas of glass 'fenestration' ("by predominately glazing the entire frontage at both street level and high level" and by using a "fully glazed atrium end wall" as well as "a full height window at the end of the central aisle"). This is mixed with "horizontal timber cladding" of sweet chestnut, "grey cladding panels" and, on the proposed surgery, "a render finish" – the nearest thing there is to the use of local indigenous materials. Bishops Waltham does not have many buildings of glass, horizontal timber cladding and grey cladding – nor does the Durley Claylands Character Area.

Why, one may ask is a superstore able to propose such a building, using such materials, just because it is a superstore shed trying to be dressed up a bit differently. The same applies to the 'Feature Roof Pop-ups' that are clearly seen

as so important. It is still just an inappropriate shed in its proposed context and historic environment.

There is, of course, a serious conflict between Think Place's Urban Design Framework (an interesting concept for a rural market town of some 2,250 residence) and the claims made in WYG's Design.

Think Place take the idea of the roofscape proposals (Principle 7) for the new plan from a farm, viewed in its rural setting, south on the Botley road (see illustration below) - a conglomeration of sheds, barns and house buildings in a variety of materials from brick to corrugated iron with a furiously mixed roofscape. WYG clearly shrink back from this and separately claim that the mono-pitch roofscape design is driven by the fact that "The buildings in the town centre are generally small in scale and due to contrasting roof pitches and ridgelines together they create an irregular roofscape. This roofscape is apparent on entering the town from the south along Botley Road where views towards the church show this mix of small scale roof forms clearly defining the character of the town." Note the critical contextual words "small in scale" and "character of the town".



View south from Botley Road - large agricultural buildings fit their rural context due to fragmented roof forms

However, as you will recall from above, the Winchester District Landscape Character Assessment's objectives for the historic environment say that planners should: "Where new development takes place, ensure that it respects the surrounding building materials and construction methods typical of the location, seeking inspiration from them wherever possible, without resorting to 'pastiche' solutions." I am sure that I do not need to explain that 'pastiche' means poor or weak imitation. The introduction of 'Feature Roof Pop-up', or mono-pitch roofs, is simply nothing more than a 'pastiche' to create something that might possibly be seen, by some, as remotely reminiscent of the local landscape and townscape.

I completely fail to see how a 77,048 sq ft gross external area building with excessive glazing, wood cladding and 'Feature Roof Pop-Ups' either really

reflects or responds to Bishops Waltham's existing townscape and landscape, or how its design is informed by this broader context. There is nothing about the proposed design details, materials or construction techniques that will enhance the local townscape or landscape, however much Sainsbury's architects argue that this is the case. So, in terms, Sainsbury's plans will do nothing to underpin the character, distinctiveness or vitality of Bishops Waltham, indeed it will undermine all three. Brave try: *nil point*.

### **3. Scale**

DLP Policy DP.3 clearly states that development will only be permitted provided it "in terms of design, scale and layout, responds positively to the character, appearance and variety of the local environment" [chapter 3, page 15]. I have already objected to the design (above) but I now also wish to object to the scale. The character, appearance and variety of the local environment is encapsulated in Bishops Waltham town centre – small scale, highly varied buildings with brick, flint or plaster frontage and slate or tile roofing.

The largest building footprint in the town is, I believe, Budgens – curiously referred to by Think Place, authors of the important 'Urban Design Framework', as a 'Grocery Store' which suggests, at the least, an unobservant site visit from a London based consultancy who did not know Budgens was a supermarket, but perhaps saw its fruit and veg advertisement prominently displayed on its High Street facing side. This sort of simple mistake is, incidentally, repeated in the diagram on page 21 which suggests that the main Winchester Road beyond the Station Road roundabout is part of the by-pass whereas the real by-pass turns right toward Corhampton. But we learn to live with such lack of basic local knowledge!

Now, to the point of scale. Sainsbury's proposed sales floor space is 3,251 square metres which is more than six times larger than Budgens' current 539 square metres. This is a jump in scale that is totally inappropriate for such a small market town, despite Sainsbury's ubiquitous suggestion that there is a need for main food shopping in Bishops Waltham.

In terms of scale, a town centre site like the Cranleigh case study that Sainsbury's provides within their application might be acceptable – not least because in that case it is 1,468 square metres (net) in size and is right on the High Street (144 – 146, High Street, Cranleigh). Precisely because it is relatively small in scale and shares a car park with the local butcher and baker at the town's central car park, it has not destroyed the vitality and viability of Cranleigh's High Street. But it is a totally irrelevant case study in terms of scale or place in Sainsbury's Bishops Waltham plans.

So, on the basis of a sudden 600% increase in the largest building in Bishops Waltham I object to the imposition of a 7,158 sq m/77,048 sq ft gross external area food store building (includes ground and lower ground floor areas) on Bishops Waltham market town and rural community. The built site, when superimposed on Bishops Waltham town centre, would reach from Bank Street in the North to the High Street Post Office in the South and from Lower Brook Street in the West to Basingwell Street in the East (see illustration below).



It is simply out of scale and is only devoted to Sainsbury's natural commercial desire to lock up the majority of main food and top-up shopping in the South Hampshire area which it is so close to achieving. It may not be a material consideration in planning terms, but it is anti-competitive. However in planning terms the new construction is indeed totally out of scale with its context and environment and thus should be rejected out of hand on this material consideration alone.

#### **4. Historic Environment**

Policy S.3 (chapter 13 'Settlements') stipulates that mixed employment and residential development will be permitted on Abbey Fields provided that:

"(v) the Bishops Waltham Conservation Area and the Bishops Waltham Palace and Ponds Scheduled Ancient Monument are not adversely affected."

The area of the Scheduled Ancient Monument is show in the diagram below.



I object to the above mentioned planning application on the basis that the building of a glass fronted, brightly illuminated superstore with a municipal 'plaza' on the south bank of the South Pond will have a shockingly adverse visual and disruptive effect on "the Bishops Waltham Conservation Area and the Bishops Waltham Palace and Ponds Scheduled Ancient Monument."

In Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment, Policy HE8, 8.1 states that:

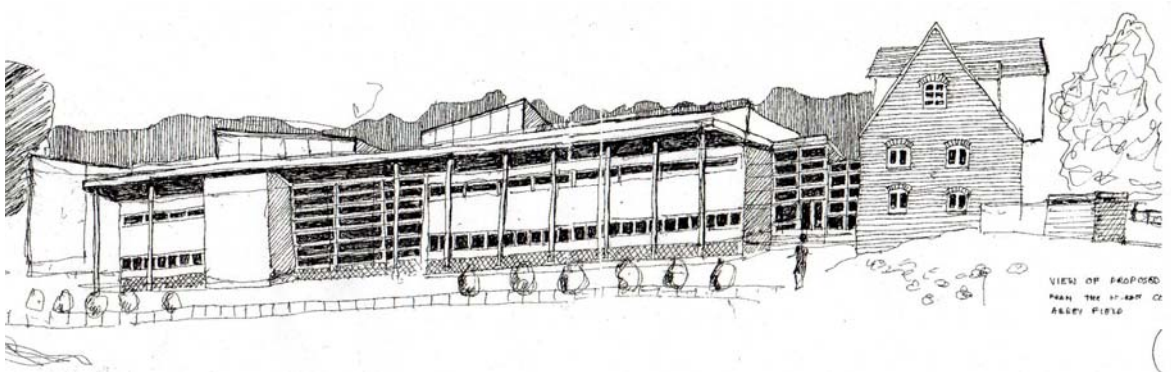
"The effect of an application on the significance of such a heritage asset or its setting is a material consideration in determining the application." (My emphasis)

So I also object to the above mentioned planning application because as graphically illustrated above it would have a seriously adverse effect on the setting of the South Pond heritage asset.

To reinforce this, below is a comparison between the low key, understated, brick and clay tiled offices [B1 use] and houses on the extant planning permission for the site.



This heavily glazed, illuminated and no doubt in due course with additional highly visible orange Sainsbury's signage (so it can be easily identified from the road) is so inappropriate for this setting that it would seem remarkable that Winchester City Council's Historic Environment Officer should fail to raise any objection whatsoever. Abbey Field is also, of course, part of the important heritage asset and the drawing below by a former Conservation Architect for Winchester City Council, Andrew Rutter, shows just how the site will be monstered by the superstore which is so out of keeping with its setting. It might be suitable for a cityscape, but not a rural market town.



If final reinforcement were necessary, in terms of the adverse effect on the setting of the historic environment of the Pond, the Palace Ruins and the Abbey Field, consider the extant permission from an aerial perspective:



And a superimposition of Sainsbury's proposals on an aerial photograph below:



Whilst the superimposition is inevitably a bit coarse it amply makes the point that in this particular historical setting the small scale houses nestling together like the other houses in the photograph is so much more appropriate than the vast footprint of this superstore shed – however much it has ‘feature pop-up roofs’.

I said earlier that it seemed remarkable that Winchester City Council’s Historic Environment Officer should fail to raise any objection to this proposal whatsoever. However, careful reading of her Historic Environment Planning Consultation Comments dated 19 July 2010 does make it less remarkable but very disconcerting at the same time. For within that report she states that:

“The scheme therefore promotes pedestrian access and enhances the public realm partly through the down grading of Station Road so that it will not be used as a rat run by vehicles but becomes a quieter, pleasant route between town and supermarket.”

Everyone in Bishops Waltham knows that Station Road is not a rat run. It is self evident if it is visited. So this clearly suggests that the responsible Historic Environment Officer has reached her conclusions without a site visit or any understanding of the immediate environs of the heritage assets in Bishops Waltham. The serious concern this raises about the ability she therefore has to make a decision not to oppose is greatly enhanced by the fact that in the same report she fails completely to address WDLP Policy HE 4 other than in reference. HE4 states that new buildings must:

“(i) respond sympathetically to the historic settlement pattern, plot sizes and plot widths, open spaces, townscape, trees and landscape features;

(ii) the height, massing, materials, plan form, roofscape and grouping of buildings are in scale and harmony with adjoining buildings and the area as a whole. The proportions of features and design details should relate well to each other and to adjoining buildings;

(iii) good quality building materials are used and these should be appropriate to the locality and sympathetic in colour, profile and texture.”

Had she even adequately addressed this standing policy, or PPS5’s Policy 8 (which again is referenced in passing) she might have been forced to reach a very different conclusion. It is to be hoped that others will now step in and rectify this dereliction of duty to protect and conserve the historic environment around Bishops Waltham’s Scheduled Monument.

## **5 The Viability and Vitality of the town centre.**

The calculations, estimates and other data used in Sainsbury’s application – especially within the Economic Development Statement are clearly weak as many others, better qualified than me, have pointed out. The concept that, and I quote:

“In any event, stores in Bishops Waltham are overtrading to such an extent that any trade diverted would, in the majority of cases, simply bring them more in

line with their 'typical' sales performance, and would not affect the viability of those shops."

At the end of the sharpest recession for decades, nearly all the stores in Bishops Waltham are clinging on in the hope of better times – two stores have closed and left the High Street in the last couple of weeks. To say that they are overtrading and that loss of trade will simply bring them into 'typical' performance is farcical.

In its consultation document Sainsbury's made a great deal of the fact that the new 'link' initiative with its bollard lighting and widened pavements was to attract shoppers into Bishops Waltham High Street. This is echoed in a number of places in the application. But the reality is that the Urban Design Framework - on which most of the application appears to be based - is quite specific about it being to draw people from the High Street toward the town's medieval heritage and re-connect the old North South axis between St Peter's Church and the Bishops Palace. The drawings on pages 102-104 of the Framework take you on that route, pointing out how people will leave the High Street and head toward Sainsbury's. It talks of a masterplan to change the entire stretch between the bus shelter and Malt Lane and making it into additional retail shops. Then, a future walk would look like this. How fantastical.

## A future walk from the High Street...



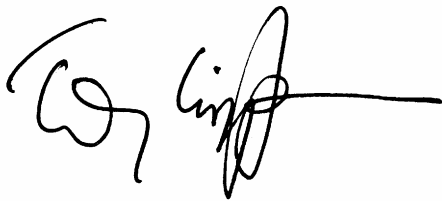
Walking from the square towards the Palace, the streetscape is now active and legible, creating a sense of continuity.

The concept that Sainsbury's shoppers will take their food shopping (including chilled and frozen food) down to their cars and then go back up the escalator to exit the store and amble into town is so unrealistic as to be laughable. People drive to superstores to complete one-stop shopping and then drive it home again. Human nature will prevail.

But the likelihood that empty-handed shoppers on the High Street might walk over to Sainsbury's is much more ominous in terms of footfall. It is interesting to note that this was indeed the whole purpose of creating a new pathway.

As is visible in so many other towns, the arrival of a supermarket or superstore means that local High Street traders first shed employees and then close one by one. So I object to the above mentioned planning application on the basis that it will directly and dramatically affect the viability and vitality of Bishops Waltham town centre – with the knock on effect that will have on the health and wellbeing of the community.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Kippenberger', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

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