

EHDC/4/B

EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT, 1990

(Section 77)

CALLED IN PLANNING INQUIRY – APPLICATION BY
SAINSBURYS SUPERMARKETS LTD

22nd September – 7th October 2009

At McMullens Brewery Site, Hartham Lane Hertford, SG13 5QA

PLANNING INSPECTORATE REFERENCE:

APP/J1915/V/09/2101286

LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY REF:

3/08/1528/FP

Summary of Evidence of Cllr William Ashley

Wallfields
Pegs Lane
Hertford, SG13 8EQ

1. In accordance with the requirements of the Inquiry Procedures, I have produced a summary of my main Proof of Evidence (EHDC/4/B).
2. My evidence at this Inquiry deals with the Council's considerations of this appeal site and the Council's reasoning and justification leading to the Council's decision to grant conditional planning permission, subject to referral to SOS
3. Section 2 of my proof outlines the planning history of the site and the considerations of the Development Control Committee. The application being considered at this Inquiry is an amended scheme which I consider has reduced the store size and the level of car parking; provided further enhancements to the riverside; improved landscaping provisions around and within the site; secured well defined pedestrian access within and around the site and considerable attention has been given to the design of the new store, its form, detailed design, materials and response to public frontages around the store. The provisions of planning conditions and the S106 will enhance the ability of the store to be well integrated with the town and to secure much needed enhancement of the Conservation Area.
4. Section 3 of my proof outlines what I consider to be the main planning issues – those being: -
 1. Local Plan / employment provisions
 2. Design / conservation issues
 3. Pedestrian links / access considerations
 4. Financial contributions
5. The main concerns that officers of the Council raised with regards to the appeal proposal, related to the restrictive access having regard to traffic generation from the development and the design impact of car parking within the conservation area.
6. In terms of highway and access considerations, I recognise in my proof that there are limited congestion problems in the roads leading up to

the Hartham Lane appeal site and that these may increase as a result of the development of the McMullen site. My view, acknowledged by other highways specialists for the appellants, Sainsbury's, and Hertfordshire County Council is that, owing to the historic nature of this part of Hertford, any major re-development of the site is likely to have a degree of impact which may cause further congestion to the local transport network.

7. However, it must also be acknowledged that when McMullens was operating as a brewery utilising most, if not all of the industrial units as part of that operation, a significant amount of traffic, including HGV movements, was generated. In my view, the area coped with that degree of traffic and activity.
8. With regards to employment provision, in my proof I consider that the development will secure new employment within the town and will be a boost to investment confidence within the wider town centre with potential further employment gains.
9. Furthermore, the Sainsbury's scheme has been designed with a flexible car park charging scheme which combined with the proposed bridge link will offer the opportunity for people to park, shop and visit the town centre from a convenient distance without any obligation to visit the store. I believe this will be to the benefit of the town centre.
10. In conservation terms, the site itself has a neglected, derelict and unhappy appearance, which, to my mind is compounded by the prominence of the location in the Conservation Area and its siting adjacent to the listed building of McMullens Brewery. There are significant opportunities to enhance the application site and surroundings and this part of the Hertford Conservation Area.
11. In design terms I comment that the positioning of the new store with the listed building looks exciting and has an interesting balance. If the Inspector is minded to refuse this scheme then the brewery building is a large local landmark building of uncertain future.

12. With regards to Planning Obligations, section 4.0 of my proof explains my considerations of two of the key areas of contributions: highways (including a footbridge) and urban design competition.
13. The scheme will revitalise the site and the wider area with a well designed building and layout which provides for extensive new landscaping within and outside the site for river access and enhanced public spaces and new pedestrian and cycle links to the town. The provision of the store and shoppers car park will be well connected to the town centre, is supported by local businesses on the west side of the town and will support the vitality and viability of the town centre. Although Hertford already has three foodstores, a new Sainsburys will provide added facilities and healthy competition from the other side of town. With new customers coming from a large catchment area, including Bengeo, from where shoppers will no longer have to drive through the town. I really believe this is the answer to the problems posed by the future of this large Conservation Area, especially situated where it is adjacent to the very attractive and much used Hartham Common, and the river.