

NOTES ON A MEETING BETWEEN SAINSBURY'S AND DORRIDGE RESIDENTS

Friday 21 May 2010

PRESENT :

Sainsbury's - Jaime Powell (Sainsbury Regional Town Planning Manager), Simon Baker (Chetwoods Architects), Sue Bailey (Gough Bailey Wright - Marketing), Gary Forster (Turley Associates - Planning Consultant).

Residents - Ian Spencer (Chair DDRA), Martin Lambert (Vice Chair DDRA), DDRA Committee members Jane Holt, David Glanfield. Larry Sayer, (Chair DROVS).

Ian Spencer explained that although there was interest locally in Sainsbury's providing an appropriate development on the Forest Court site a groundswell of opinion that the store size was too large had grown during the later stages of the planning process. DROVS had been formed in response to this and had been partly driven by the perception that DDRA had not strongly opposed the plan. Ian pointed out that with such wide variations in local opinion DDRA could not speak for all residents, but the Committee had agreed to challenge Sainsbury's on a number of points, notably parking and traffic issues. Early support for the project had been modified as residents became more aware of the potential impact of the development. It had been noted that although a substantial number of residents were in favour of the development they had not formed an action group and had been less vocal than the opponents.

The Sainsbury's team confirmed the company's desire to get a feel for what is now acceptable locally, but pointed out that significant changes had been made in response to public comment, although it had maintained throughout that a reduction in size could not be considered. It was now important to work with locals, to learn what Dorridge could accept, and to examine alternatives. However it was stressed that it would not be possible to satisfy all shades of opinion, and that any suggested plan would have to be commercially viable.

General discussion followed on how best to move forward. Simon Baker sketched a number of overlays to illustrate how the existing plans could be altered but pointed out that gains would be balanced by losses as the store size had to be sufficient to generate the income to support the whole development. Thus a greatly reduced Sainsbury sales area could result in the loss of some of the add-ons

such as the individual retail units, the community room, even the relocation of the doctors' surgery. A number of suggestions were put forward but it was accepted that these only reflected the views of those present and it was agreed that there was an urgent need to widen the discussion to a broad cross-section of the community. When questioned as to whether this could effect change Sainsbury's confirmed that they do have a degree of flexibility, but stressed again that it would be bound by economic reality. All present agreed that SMBC Planning Officers should be involved in future consultations in order to ensure that the council remained informed of progress.

It was therefore resolved that :

- Sainsbury's would organise a day of workshops, preferably before the end of June.
- A flyer announcing the workshops would be delivered to all homes in the DDRA area.
- The flyer would include a survey designed by Sainsbury, but acceptable to DDRA and DROVS. The results of the survey would form the basis of the workshops.
- Residents would be invited to register their interest in attending the workshops and would be required to supply their full names and addresses.
- Limitations of space mean that registration will not guarantee attendance; a list of residents to be invited will be compiled with the intention of having the broadest range of opinion represented.
