

Public meeting to discuss the revised Wilmer Place proposal

12th June 2012, The Old Fire Station, Leswin Street, N16, 7.00pm – 8.30pm

Aim of the meeting

- To establish local residents' response to the second exhibition and the new proposals and to discuss where the campaign should go next

Summary of revisions to the proposal

1. Reducing the size of the retail unit by a third; the new proposal would include a Sainsbury's store with a sales area of 16,000ft² (reduced from the original 24,000ft²) which is about the same as the existing Sainsbury's up at Stamford Hill; the retail space would provide for 'up to' 150 full time and part time jobs
2. Removal of the 94 space basement car park with no car parking on site apart from some disabled car parking; residents will apparently not be allowed to have resident's parking on neighbouring streets. Along with this comes the removal of the proposed vehicle access off Stoke Newington High Street;
3. Increasing the number of flats on site from 44 to 68. This comprises 14 1-bed, 33 2-beds and 21 3-bed flats. The residential development will be across 5 storeys. Increased provision of affordable housing;
4. Retention of the buildings on Stoke Newington High Street that were previously earmarked for demolition (The original plan included the demolition of two Victorian terraced buildings at 193 – 197 Stoke Newington High Street)

Surveys of local shops

- A survey was conducted which looked at the costs of everyday items in local independent shops, Sainsbury's and other supermarkets in the local area and Sainsbury's nationally
- It covered shops within a half mile radius of the site and compared 25 items in 12 local shops
- 17 out of 25 items were cheaper in the local shops than Sainsbury's
- 2 out of 25 items were about the same price
- 5 items were more expensive in the local shops than in Sainsbury's but were cheaper in Tesco and Morrisons than in Sainsbury's
- Some products, especially fruit and veg were much cheaper in the local shops than in the supermarkets
- The second survey involved spending a lot of time talking to local businesses
- It asked them who they employed, how many they employed and their thoughts about the development
- 5 weren't interested in the development proposal, 29 were very interested
- 165 people were employed permanently in the 29 shops – a mixture of full time and part time
- One shop was in favour of the development the rest were strongly against the development
- There is considerable anxiety about the development amongst local shop owners
- The survey also highlights the extent to which local shops use local services (accountants, handymen etc) which would not be used by Sainsbury's so their impact on the local economy is considerable
- The results of the surveys will be published shortly

The view of the developer

An overview of the *developer's* point of view was given so that people present could understand their perspective on the development:

- Sainsbury's have taken quite a step by going for a car free development. From the start they have said that they would get 80% of their custom by foot, 20% by car, and they are essentially abandoning much of this 20%.
- As there is no car parking for the store, customers will therefore have to walk through a section of the high street which is somewhat neglected.
- Shops in the immediate area will benefit
- Sainsbury's expect to take business away from Morrison's.
- The effect on Church Street is not so clear but Church Street shops are by and large not ones that compete with Sainsbury's

- The site is poorly utilised at the moment
- There is a need for housing
- The businesses on the site are not retail units and are on short leases so there is no loss of existing retail space
- The facades of the buildings on the High Street will be kept and this will revitalise the buildings

Views of people present

The information given below is a summary of many of the comments or questions that were raised at the meeting:

- Quite a few people at the public meeting were unaware that the second consultation had taken place
- When will the planning application be submitted? The planning application will go in at the end of June and there is a 21 day period after publication during which people can comment
- For the planning committee, the developer's arguments will seem compelling and their changes to the plan have to a certain extent addressed many of the major planning issues
- Planning is a value judgement that officers have to make, it's about balancing competing impacts
- If there are objections then it will go to Planning Committee but they need strong planning reasons to turn it down
- What is the nature of the Section 106 payments? No substantive information as yet and that will be defined by the planning department
- It's a change of use from light industrial and live/work into retail use – this has to be considered by the council
- At the exhibition they claimed that the council wants an anchor retailer that would keep people shopping in Stoke Newington rather than getting in the car and going to Dalston, Stamford Hill etc
- If local shops are cheaper is the Sainsbury's a threat? The success of the supermarkets is down to them projecting a perception of cheapness and they will get people through the door using whatever measures it takes
- Reduced consumer choice – If it's allowed to go ahead, Sainsbury's will dominate the A10 corridor. They can have pricing strategies that will put people out of business. Sainsbury's have deep pockets and can discount heavily
- Sustainability – if the development looks like it's going to be sustainable the planning officers have to approve it but sustainable for who? It's not sustainable for people already on the site, not sustainable for local grocery shops.
- Stoke Newington is an inner city community, a settled community – the developers may try to cast Stoke Newington as being isolated and in need of this supermarket but the community is already well provided for
- Has an economic / jobs assessment been done by campaigners yet? It would strengthen an alternative plan
- On the one hand Shop Local is being promoted by Hackney Council but on the other hand they're promoting a big supermarket development in an area dominated by local shops
- 44 live/work units exist in the warehouse on the site plus a range of other light industrial businesses on the car park
- There's an antiques business on the site which will have to move.
- There will be a net loss of about 100 car parking spaces – will that have an impact on local businesses?
- Has a transport assessment been conducted by the developer? The transport was always the weakest aspect of their original plan
- Will people drop off and pick up a lot – this could have a serious impact on congestion in the one-way system,
- How will a Sainsbury's of this size survive without the car park? Could the door be open for a retrospective planning application to add a car park after development?
- The properties are sold on the basis that residents won't have a car but how would this be policed? Residents would be parking in nearby streets
- Traffic survey conducted by members of Stoke Local revealed that there would be serious traffic problems with the original proposal
- Remaining heavy traffic under the new proposal would still cause a problem on Wilmer Place and Church Street – what about the impact on the local primary school?
- 30 regulated movements? What are these additional movements over and above the HGV deliveries?
- Pick up and drop off of customers is a concern
- Do Sainsbury's have an alternative plan regarding parking? It would be amazing to have a supermarket of this size without parking

- There have been sharp changes in shopping habits in the last few years and they're going to be catering for a much more local clientele
- Freight vehicles – how will they move down Church Street?
- How close the residential properties will be to the cemetery – light pollution, noise pollution, effects on bats and birds
- What will the proportion of affordable housing be? Affordable housing in Hackney is often far from affordable
- What is the view of Whole Foods? They are against the development
- Suggestion was made that there might be small retail spaces in the development which could have onerous restrictions attached to them which no business would take on and then Sainsbury's could step in to take the space for expansion. No evidence for this as yet
- At the consultation they didn't have any graphics showing how the development would look from the High Street / Stamford Hill which was a major omission
- It's a conservation area, there was a consultation in 2004, the height of the conservation area should define the height of new developments – is this legally binding?
- Are they going to close the Stamford Hill Sainsbury's? They said at the exhibition that they had no plans to close it, same for the Sainsbury's on the High Street
- Stoke Newington Business Association is neutral – they have to represent businesses from all spheres, big, medium and small sized businesses
- Affordable housing – can we come up with a demand for minimum affordable housing? The final percentage of affordable housing will be arrived at through horse trading between the developers and planning officers

Straw Poll

- Around 75 people were present
- None were in favour of the proposal, about 5 or 6 were undecided, the rest were against

What next?

- Getting shopkeepers involved in the campaign is very important especially encouraging them to respond to the planning committee as a group. The shops need to say in volume how they will suffer if the development goes ahead
- Publish the shop surveys
- 5,000 signatures on the online and physical petition but that was about the previous development – do we need another petition?
- Boycott of existing Sainsbury's suggested. A more positive approach is to actively encourage local shopping. Could launch a campaign to parody the price matching ads of Sainsbury's pointing out that the local shops are cheaper.
- Build the Stokey Local network so that as many people as possible are able to register their views to the Planning Committee
- We could contact Planning Aid For London – do they still exist? They could provide valuable support. We'll have 21 calendar days to get objections in
- Should we come up with an outline proposal that gives a credible alternative option that the community could get behind?
- Alternative consultation is a possibility?
- We don't have much time so we need to come up with concrete things that people can object to that fall within planning guidelines
- Standard letter online and available in shops and markets?
- Individual letters are better than petitions when it gets to planning committee. It's also good to have letters that give peoples' individual views rather than standard letters