

Further Tabled Update for Item 2.8 – Land east of Queenborough Road (Planning Ref: 19/502696/FULL)

Objection from agent acting for Tesco

A further very recent objection letter has been received from the agent acting on behalf of Tesco, which follows their previous objection, as outlined in paragraph 5.3 of the committee report. In the latest letter received, the points specifically raised relate to the impact of the existing store being closed and a new out of centre store being opened; the weight given to the threshold for requiring a retail impact assessment; that only the additional floorspace has been assessed, rather than the total; the health of the town centre; the impact upon Tesco; the impact of linked trips / loss of trips to the town centre; and whether the proposal achieves sustainable development. These matters are considered in detail in the committee report, specifically in paragraphs 8.18 - 8.27. In addition, the issue of whether the proposal constitutes sustainable development is a theme running throughout the appraisal and conclusion section of the report. As such I have no further comments to make in respect of these points as I believe they are adequately dealt with.

The objection does also raise the issue of the impact that the on-going Covid-19 pandemic has had on town centres. In respect of the health of town centres, the application has been determined, upon, amongst other matters, the latest and most up to date information that Officers and independent consultants have available to them. This includes the Borough's Retail and Leisure Needs Assessment (December 2018). Despite the on-going situation regarding Covid-19, I am not aware of any further assessment that has been undertaken which contains more up to date evidence upon the health of town centres than the above mentioned study. As a result, I do not believe that the currently unquantified impacts of Covid-19 would outweigh the findings of this study in this regard.

Conclusion

Overall I remain of the view that the assessment of the application has been undertaken fairly, in accordance with adopted local and national policies and balances the issues appropriately. In conclusion, I recommend that the application is approved subject to the conditions in the report, as amended in line with the comments set out in the Tabled Update dated 12/11/2020.

PG – 13/11/2020