

# The Crediton Chamber of Commerce Crediton Area Marketing and Management

CAMM: Devonian House, 4 Union Terrace, Crediton, Devon, EX17 3DY  
Chamber: 31 High Street, Crediton, Devon, EX17 3AJ

28 February, 2007

Keith Garside Esq.,  
The Planning Department,  
Mid Devon District Council,  
Phoenix House,  
Phoenix Lane,  
Tiverton EX16 6PP.

Dear Mr Garside,

## Tesco Planning Application

1. I write on behalf of the Crediton Chamber of Commerce Crediton Area Marketing and Management, which is concerned to promote the interests of the Crediton area and its business community. We wish to oppose the application of Tesco to build a new superstore on the A377 Exeter Road.
2. Those of our members on the Crediton Industrial Estate are anxious to secure a link road linking the estate to the A377 and see the Tesco development as offering a way of achieving that. Those of our members who are traders in the High Street are almost all vigorously opposed to the concept of a new Tesco supermarket on Exeter Road. While acknowledging the validity of these sectional interests, we have looked at the impact of the proposed development on the life of Crediton as a whole, both in terms of businesses in the area and of the social fabric of the town. For reasons that we outline below, we oppose the granting of planning permission to Tesco and would ask the Council to reject the application.
3. The current planning application has raised specific concerns in the way in which it relates both to central government planning policy and the local plan which we wish to highlight and which we submit must be fully addressed, failing which planning permission should not be granted. This is for the following reasons.
4. The site is allocated (CRE8) for employment use (B1, B2 and B8) in the recently adopted local plan. It is not allocated for retail (A1) use. This is an up to date allocation and so, in accordance with S38(6) of the 2004 Act, permission should be refused unless there are material considerations sufficient to indicate a decision other than in accordance with the development plan's requirements. No such considerations have been advanced.

5. The CRE1 allocation makes provision for up to 3000 square metres of food retail floor space, on a site which is centred on the existing Somerfield store. Whilst this site is not within or adjacent to the town centre, the plan acknowledges that it is the most appropriate location available for the additional floor space that is needed if the town is to avoid leakage of expenditure. The plan also notes that this is the closest, of the available sites, to the town centre and (CRE1) provision is made for improved access by foot, cycle and public transport. Furthermore, the plan reaches the clear conclusion that enlarging this existing retail site is preferable to developing a new site, in terms of overall travel impact.

6. The plan was adopted in the light of the government's most recent (PPS6) policies for planning the future of town centres. The proposed Tesco site is not only out-of-centre, it is out-of-town. Access would not be easy, safe or convenient for pedestrians or cyclists; local residents would mostly drive to the site.

7. Crediton's Traffic Action Group has highlighted the likely detrimental impact on air quality and the limitations of the mitigating factors proposed as part of the development. The proposed contribution by Tesco to a possible link road to the trading estate (under a Section 106 Agreement) can only be a possible further mitigating factor in the context of Devon County Council being in a position to actually go ahead with such a road scheme within the relatively near future, and it is our understanding at present that no firm plans exist. In addition it would remain the case, link road or not, that the majority of visitors to the proposed store would use Exeter Road in any event.

8. We understand that there have been discussions with Devon County Council over a link road and the Chamber of Commerce has made suggestions of a possible route. If planning permission is to be given, we think it essential that the link road should be proceeded with by Devon County Council, with a significant contribution to the cost from Tesco being a condition of approval for their scheme. Even with a link road as part of the scheme, we are concerned that the Tesco store would be opened well before the link road was built. Improving the road infrastructure should be an integral part of this development.

9. We welcome the decision of Devon County Council to allocate £140,000 through the Towns Villages and Rural Communities Programme, to progress work to further explore the scope for a link road in 2007/08. Regardless of whether the Tesco application is approved or not, we strongly support the building of a link road.

10. The size of the proposed Tesco store indicates that it is not intended to serve Crediton and its surrounding villages alone, but also to draw substantial numbers of people from Exeter. This will put a considerable strain on the A377 Exeter to Crediton road. In paragraph 9.2.5 of its Transport Assessment, Tesco concludes "that the development results in an acceptable impact on the local highway network". We disagree. The extra traffic on the A377 will be far from acceptable.

11. The government's key objective for town centres is to promote their vitality and viability. The local plan identifies a need for just 700 square metres more retail floor space in Crediton. As the Department for Communities and Local Government research report, *Impact of Large Foodstores on Market Towns and District Centres*, indicates, a new 5,500 square metre food store, in addition to the existing store on the CRE1 site, could severely undermine the vitality and viability of the High Street, where most food shops sell locally sourced produce. This in turn could reduce the likelihood of future private sector investment in the town centre and lead to an increase in the number of vacant premises. The High Street would then degenerate and it would no longer serve its valuable role as the town's hub of economic and social life.

12. This report is reinforced by *High Street Britain 2015*, a report of the All Party Parliamentary Small Shops Group published in 2006, which reported that "50% of turnover from local retailers is returned to the local economy. However large retailers may return as little as 5% to the local economy".

13. We are conscious of the fact that a development of the size of that proposed by Tesco will have a major impact on a number of areas of Crediton's life and well-being. While initially it will add to the shopping choice of consumers in Crediton and beyond, there will be a price to be paid for this. In the longer term it will do considerable damage to the town's economic and social health, as the government and parliamentary reports quoted above indicate. We welcome the Mid Devon District Council's decision to commission research on the effect of the development on the economic wellbeing of the town and regard this as an essential part of the planning process.

14. We urge that full consideration is given to all of the above factors in considering the application, which in our view should be rejected.

Yours sincerely,

Demitri Coryton  
Chairman, CAMM

Chris Nicholl  
Secretary, Chamber