

Tesco opposition meeting minutes 14/04/09 – Swan Hotel

From the Secretary – please excuse me for any problems with the minutes as these are my first and I may have got some names wrong or not at all.

Ryan Pink and Andrew Maric introduced themselves and spoke briefly about what we hope to achieve.

- Ryan Pink says that although he is against Tesco building in Newport Pagnell, he does not think the group should become a “hate Tesco” group and lose its focus. He thinks it should be about raising awareness of the issues to each resident so that they are able to make up their own minds about how the store will affect the town.
- Andrew Maric stated that although he is part of the Lib Dem Network he is here because he is passionate about the town after generations of his family have lived here.

There are 6 ½ thousand homes in Newport Pagnell, which all need to be covered by some kind of leaflet drop/door-to-door visits to:

- Let everyone know that Tesco have applied for the store.
- Inform them of the potential issues arising if they get planning permission.

Mervyn Dobbin has a town planning background and has written to the Town Council already:

- The application is online, and Tesco have appointed planning consultants, if permission is refused, they will go to appeal.
- We need to
 - a. Make our opposition known, by letter or email, stating how the development goes against planning policy.
 - b. Put pressure on local politicians and make sure the people who are making the decisions know our feelings, especially the councillors on the development planning committee – make sure they are flooded with letters.
 - c. A template (pro forma) letter is better than none.

Tom Lonergan has lived on Lagonda Close for a long time:

- Proposal that we each visit every house on our own street (and a few others if we are able) to bring the issue to their attention.
- Take a pro forma letter with them and explain how important it is.
- Suggested we get a map of the town and divide up between us.

Ryan Pink:

- o Suggested we make a letter with all the points about it, how you appeal and the background to be added to the pro forma letter.

Maggie Smith:

- o Suggested we also hand out leaflets on the High Street on Saturday morning.

A lady who lives on Priory Street (sorry didn't get her name!):

- o Offered to join Maggie.
- o Highlighted we need to let people know of the long term effects – her neighbour hadn't thought of them until she pointed them out to him.

DIRECT EFFECTS: closure of butchers, green grocers, newsagents, bakers etc.

INDIRECT: closure of optician, florist, pharmacist etc. Even if Tesco didn't open these concessions, the High Street is unlikely to be able to sustain the footfall through these shops, if the other shops above have to close.

Maggie Smith:

- o Highlighted that we need to investigate the Human Rights Act or European Law about the right to live your life as you have chosen without something drastically changing your quality of life, as other opposition groups have successfully used this legislation in the past.
- o Tesco have no interest in the Woolworths or Somerfield sites.
- o Spoken to the lady from the Luton and Dunstable Federation of Small Businesses, who came to last week's meeting. She'd be happy to help but couldn't come tonight.
 - a. We need to be constructive – one voice, not lots of different voices – recognised as a solid group.
 - b. Highlight the loss of amenities and quality of life e.g. pollution, traffic, noise, doors slamming, radios, light pollution.
 - c. Speak to Environmental Health to see what issues there could be.

- d. Tesco are predatory – they will say their opening hours are 9-5, then increase them over time.
- e. Our District Councillor should help.
- f. Tesco will have to apply for change of use permission.
- g. Tesco have done their own traffic census already in October 2008.

Debbie Fielding:

- o It's not just Newport Pagnell that would be affected – the villages need to be involved too.

Mervyn Dobbin, Debbie Fielding and Becky Pink offered to write the pro forma letter.

Harry and Val McQuade offered to print the leaflets/letters. We would need around 2,000 initially.

Harry says it would cost about £50 for 1000.

Deliver to Roy Pinks Cycles when printed.

Newport News have put leaflets in their daily papers before so we could ask them to do it again.

If people sign them they also need to fill in their address, and we can take them in bulk to the council.

Keep a tally of how many we have got per street (but don't keep names and addresses due to legal issues) in case they 'get lost'.

It was suggested that people could sign the pro forma letter and also write their own.

Mervyn Dobbin opposes this as it is unethical.

Each person can write a letter though; it doesn't have to be one per house.

Concentrate on houses closest to the site.

Each person who goes out to their street needs a briefing document so they have the facts and can answer questions.

We need a leaflet with all the information so we can just drop it through letter boxes if no one is in. This information needs to be on the website as well.

Put info in shop windows, library etc.

Mick Pacey is a PR specialist with TV and celebrity contacts . He also lives opposite the site, and is heading up the new development at Woade Corner:

- o Offered to drive the PR angle. He should be able to get national TV coverage and a celebrity down, especially because it's the Aston Martin site with 150 year history. Quentin Wilson was mentioned.
- o Get a lot of people to demonstrate on the site and a few celebrities and a TV crew – embarrass the planners into taking notice.
- o If we did it soon we could get kids and parents too, as it's the Easter holidays. This makes a better story, as it shows it's an issue that crosses generations.
- o We'd need to let people know about it, as well as the media. TV cameras naturally attract curiosity.

Andrew Maric:

- o By law the council can't make a decision on the issue until the Development Control Committee Meeting on the 21st May and have to take letters from the public up until the meeting is held.
- o Propose doing a big media event 2/3 weeks before.

Mick P:

- o We need to do something ASAP AND do a sustained campaign to keep awareness up.

Someone mentioned getting politicians to help, eg. Mark Lancaster.

Get local shop keeper, the Business Association and Newport Partnership involved.

It was suggested we need a spokesperson to be the focus of the group.

It was decided that we need to form a structure about the points we want to make at the MK Council Meeting (three minutes each) so everyone is not going over the same ground.

Mervyn Dobbin, Maggie Smith, Andrew Maric and Tom Lonergan all volunteered to speak for three minutes each and come up with the plan.

Mervin:

- o Planning law is in the process of changing, and it's likely to go in Tesco's favour.
- o A planner makes a report to the Development Control Committee, but they don't necessarily adhere to it.
- o He offered to check the dates of all the meetings and deadlines as there is some confusion over them.

Andrew Maric:

- o The Lib Dems have offered half an A5 sheet to put across 6 bullet points about the planning grounds we can appeal on – it goes to print tomorrow.

It was agreed to use the 6 points from MK council's letter.

Russell Barnbrook:

- o We need to get proof that Tesco would be bad for Newport, not just speculation.

It was suggested we need a name for the group – much discussion ensued – possibilities included:

NO TO TESCO
SAVE OUR HIGH STREET
SAVE NEWPORT PAGNELL HIGH STREET
KEEP NEWPORT LOCAL
PROTECT OUR HIGH STREET
KEEP TRADE LOCAL
KEEP NEWPORT LOCAL

It was decided that the PR team would pick the name based on what would attract the most media attention. So perhaps something short and simple with Tesco in the title, with a more extended strap-line that explains more, e.g.

NO TO TESCO
Newport Pagnell says "Keep our High Street Local"

The name needs to be decided so that we can get a website up and running – Derek Sanderson can make a website in a day or so, so we need to put the content together.

ACTIONS:

Copy group to write a pro forma letter and briefing document.

PR group come up with a plan to raise attention.

Meeting group to form a structure of segments of 3 minutes.

People claim a few streets to go round door-to-door – Tom Lonergan to organise.

Decide on a name.

Make a website. (text group will need to help come up with content)

A template (pro forma) letter is better than none, though we should encourage people to write personal letters if they are able.

We need all the key dates to be on any leaflets/web site so that everyone is clear of the deadlines involved and what meetings they can go to.

Meet again on Thursday at Portfields Community Centre at 7.30.