

Orpington Car Park Plan Rejected



Following a rowdy public meeting attended by over 200 people to discuss the Tesco planning application for the Orpington car park site, it was rejected at a council meeting on the 20th April. Tesco reiterated however that they would appeal, so it would be wrong to assume that this matter is anywhere near resolution.

The application was rejected by the Council's Development Control Committee on the basis of excessive size and bulk, but there were also many negative comments on the likely traffic congestion, insufficient public parking, impact on local residents and the impact on town centre shops.

At the public meeting it was disclosed that the new "superstore" would contain over 50,000 square feet of selling space, which is larger than the Tesco store at Ruxley Corner. It would also be bigger than the new Sainsbury store in Sidcup, another "town centre" store which is creating major traffic problems. Only 60% of the space would be for food, with the remainder other goods.

Maximum car movements in and out of the store would be 400 per hour, plus up to 75 per day from the "home delivery service". Tesco argued that shoppers would not visit the store when the roads were congested, but there was widespread scepticism that the surrounding roads could cope. Most people foresaw even more congestion on Station Road and at the War Memorial roundabout than currently exists, and "rat-running" down side roads.

There was no provision for parking for the "affordable houses" in the development, and the residents of 30 flats at the rear of the shops on the High St would lose the free parking in Augustus Lane. The public parking was increased to 195 spaces on the final application, but this is still far short of the current usage.

The overall height of the structure was also lowered slightly and some flats overlooking Orchard Grove were removed, but residents were not impressed by these changes. They would still suffer overshadowing, 24-hour noise, and traffic problems.

Although the development did not appear to be in accord with the "Planning Brief", unfortunately it seems that this was never formally adopted (an oversight by the Council Planning Department surely).