

BRIDGWATER TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE TOWN PUBLIC MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 28 MARCH 2011 AT 7.30PM TOWN HALL BRIDGWATER

PRESENT: Councillor Bill Monteith (Mayor of Bridgwater – in the Chair), 10 members of the Town Council, and some 190 members of the public.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Cllr Hall (*declaration of a personal and prejudicial interest and therefore took no part*) & Cllr Smeed.

WELCOME:

The Mayor welcomed members of the public to the specially convened meeting requested by six local government electors for the parish. He outlined the process to be followed in the conduct of the meeting.

MOTION: Proposal to be considered:

'That this town believes that the sale of the Northgate site to Tesco Ltd will be detrimental both to the historic and cultural character of our town, and to the future of retail trading in the High Street and Eastover, where there are already clear and continuing signs of a serious down-turn in trade.

This meeting therefore calls upon our elected representatives on the Town Council to join with local traders and electors in formally objecting to the sale and development as a supermarket of the Northgate site, and, in consultation with Sedgemoor District Council and electors, to seek alternative ways of developing this site'.

PROPOSED BY: Ms Glen Burrows – Ms Burrows thanked the Town Council for arranging the meeting. She was concerned that there had been insufficient consultation and opportunity for public involvement in the decision taken by SDC and SCC to sell the land to Tesco. The signatories wished to see the enhancement of the town centre which they did not believe Tesco would achieve but would rather add to what they regarded as the present demoralising numbers of empty retail premises. They wanted a better way forward to help traders. They had also realized that the whole area including all of the open space (Brewery Field) was being sold which they opposed. Responses to what surveys had been conducted showed the town's people did not want another supermarket and certainly not one of 60,000sq ft. She asked all to support the motion.

Ms Burrows summed up at the end of the debate commending the motion to the meeting.

SECONDED BY: Mrs Angela Tarr – Mrs Tarr, a resident of the immediate area opposed the loss of the open space due to be reduced by some 23%. Local people had accepted the Splash when built because of the leisure facility it provided in the heart of the town but was firmly against the proposed tesco development. She feared the traffic impact, noise and light pollution that could result. At worst she hoped for a covenant to retain the open space in perpetuity.

15 members of the audience then spoke to the motion in the main opposing the proposed development and Tesco store, particularly because the company were the sole bidders and because of what they regarded as the adverse impact on the town, particularly the town centre and trade – some citing examples elsewhere. Some doubted that the benefits to the town which had been suggested with the development would actually be realized and wished to see a much more beneficial and community led future use of the site.

The MOTION was put to the meeting following the summing up and was carried.

The vast majority of those present and entitled to vote as registered electors of the town in favour with one against. The Town Council members present abstained.

The report of the meeting will be submitted to the next meeting of the Town Council.

The meeting finished at 8.45pm

Signed:

Chairman