

## PROPOSED TESCO

### Consultation

1. The Council launched its 'Have Your Say' seven-week consultation programme on the 30 August 2006. The purpose of the consultation was to seek views on the following: -
  - Is the Feethams site right for development?
  - What are the views on the Tesco proposal or any other retail proposal? Does it fit with the vision for Darlington's future?

### Audience Reached

2. The 'Have Your Say' programme has been widely communicated using a variety of media. Every household and business in Darlington has received information by way of the Town Crier. The local radio has promoted the programme daily and provided details on the latest consultation events. The Northern Echo has supported the consultation from the outset with regular articles and had its own readers poll. In addition there have been 7,131 hits on the Council website from residents seeking information and 33 calls to the Council's hotline telephone number.
3. Every electoral ward in Darlington has been targeted and 75 consultation events have taken place through a mix of activities ranging from formal activities by way of workshop events facilitated by Karol Marketing (independent consultants employed to ensure that the process was entirely unbiased), presentation sessions facilitated by Darlington Borough Council staff and informal events in the form of road shows. The consultation team have handed out 16,000 leaflets and comment cards personally to individuals and 686 residents have attended formal meetings.
4. In addition the Council's Youth Service has facilitated specific events for young people to coincide with Youth Democracy Week and the Council commissioned a Mori poll to interview 1,000 residents. Independently of the Council, a 'Say No to Tesco' campaign has been running alongside the Council's 'Have Your Say' campaign.
5. The Mori survey demonstrated that 70% of those surveyed had heard a great deal or fair amount about the proposals and only 3% had heard nothing, evidence of the success of the programme in reaching the public of Darlington.
6. More detailed analysis of the results from the consultation is being undertaken and will be available shortly.

### 'Have Your Say' Activities

7. Formal activities overall have been targeted at community activists and the business community. Over 3,000 specific invitations were sent out to a wide range of organisations and community and voluntary representatives.

8. Informal consultation has taken the form of road show events, the purpose being to engage residents who are not community activists and who would not normally come to formal events or necessarily engage in a consultation process. Roadshow events were purposely located in areas where there would be high levels of footfall such as outside primary schools, community centres, estate shops, Bondgate Market (Fridays and a Saturday), and in the market square linking to the R&B festival. The mobile library was also utilised as a way of providing information to residents. Staff also took the road show to Surestart activities and to three major employers in the town at Lingfield Point, Orange and Cummins to further allow working people to 'Have their Say'.
9. Throughout the process people have been encouraged to let the Council know in writing what they think of the proposal.

### **'Have Your Say' Young Peoples events**

10. Young people's consultation has been coordinated by the Youth Service and undertaken to coincide with Youth Democracy Week. The Youth Service has canvassed young people's opinions and has run sessions within schools, colleges and youth groups. They have also undertaken roving interviews with young people in the town centre.

### **Mori Poll**

11. The Council commissioned Ipsos MORI to undertake an independent survey to establish the views and opinions of residents on the proposed development. A sample of 1,000 residents from across the area has been interviewed using a random quota sampling approach. Individual households were selected randomly by MORI and respondents interviewed considered a structured questionnaire. The key question asked people how strongly they support or oppose the proposed Tesco development. 25% supported it, 17% neither supported or opposed, 2% had no opinion and 56% opposed it.

### **'Say No to Tesco' Campaign**

12. The Council received a 10,800 signed petition from the 'Say No to Tesco' campaign on Friday the 20 October 2006. The 'Say No to Tesco' group believes that, were such a development to be approved, it would represent a threat to the viability of existing retailers and the businesses, which are reliant on them. In addition the group believe that it is inappropriate that the land identified for the development which is a valuable community resource, sited as it is near to St Cuthbert's Church, the river, the Market Square and the Dolphin Centre, should be handed over to a supermarket chain for private commercial development. The group believe that should Tesco or any other supermarket chain be allowed to redevelop this site, that the historic, economic and social character of the town would suffer an irreversible and undesirable change. The petition handed in has drawn support from all age groups and from all parts of the town and its catchment area.

## Findings from consultation

13. In total 2797 comments on the proposal have been received via email, letter or comment cards. Comments have been received from every electoral ward in Darlington and a good mix of age ranges as outlined below have been engaged.

- 12-24 17%
- 25-34 10%
- 35-44 15%
- 45-54 11%
- 55-59 8%
- 60-64 11%
- 65-74 18%
- 75+ 10%

14. A breakdown of the results in terms of whether residents supported the proposal or not is outlined in the table below. The table outlines that there is overwhelming opposition to the Tesco proposal.

**Table 1: Breakdown of Results**

Source	Support the proposal	Do not support the proposal	Undecided	Total
‘ Have Your Say’ General	503 (18%)	2181 (78%)	113 (4%)	2,797
‘ Have Your Say’ Young People	63 (28%)	133 (58%)	31 (14%)	227
Mori Poll	25%	56%	19%	459
‘ Say No to Tesco	N/A	10,800	N/A	10,800

## Themes For and Against the Proposal

15. The themes that have emerged from the consultation process identify that a large number of people whilst supporting the development of the Feethams site do not support the Tesco proposal and many respondents do not support the building of a supermarket in that area.

16. The following themes emerged from the general consultation from those residents who were in support of the proposal:

- The town is declining, it will help address this and increase investment in the area.
- It is a modern update to fit the new Town Centre
- Tesco is welcome because of the range of products they sell and will bring further competition
- It will save on travelling to other Tesco stores located outside the town.
- It will make it easier for people to shop who do not own a car
- Regeneration of a part of town, which looks run down, and an eyesore.

- It will bring in more trade to the town centre, create more jobs and increase business in the centre
  - It will bring additional car parking.
16. The findings from the Young People's consultation in support of the proposal echo the findings from the general consultation, primarily that there will be more jobs, additional car parking, more shops and easy for people to get to and that the redevelopment of the site will modernise the area.
17. Listed below are the most frequent themes from the general consultation that emerged from people against the proposal.
- Proposed development will change the character of the town
  - Negative impact on the historic market town image, market square and the uniqueness of the town and reduce the number of visitors to the town
  - Town will become completely characterless
  - Proposal will turn Darlington into just another ordinary and dull town centre
  - Detrimental affect on the markets and other retailers within the town, increasing the number of empty shops, which will impact on the diversity of shops operating in the town
  - Retailers within the town will not be able to compete with the buying power of Tesco and the choice and range of shops in the town will reduce
  - There are too many supermarkets in Darlington the town does not need another one
  - Tesco are a powerful organisation only interested in destroying the competition
  - Imposing structure of the development will have a negative impact on St Cuthbert's which will be overwhelmed by the modern building spoiling the setting of the church and the market place
  - The design, size and bulk of the proposal looks too modern and out of character with the town
  - The closing of businesses within the town centre will negate any jobs created by the proposal
  - It will create more traffic congestion, which will have an impact on the environment
  - Proposal is contrary to existing planning policy.
18. The findings from consultation with Young People who do not support the proposal again echo the themes that have emerged from the general consultation in that it will impact on the market traders, it will force many businesses to close, it will increase traffic congestion and that it would be in the wrong location.

### **Alternative Proposals**

19. A number of respondents from the general consultation when considering the proposal have suggested alternative development proposals for the site. The most popular suggestion was the building of a new bus station with good amenities. Other suggestions included the provision of leisure and recreational facilities such as a museum, art gallery, cinema, bowling alley with café/restaurant provision. It was also suggested that the site should be utilised for green recreational open space as this is lacking in the town centre.
20. Young people have also suggested alternative uses for the site, many of the suggestions focused on leisure activities such as a bowling alley, cinema, ice skating, go karting, paint balling, youth clubs and additional clothes shops.

