

# PRESS RELEASE

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### Shrewsbury campaigners Call Time on Retrospective Tesco Application

**A group of campaigners who have been fighting against Tesco's ignorance of a significant planning condition on their Shrewsbury Extra store, have lashed out at Tesco for continually deferring a retrospective planning application.**

When the initial approval was given by the Secretary of State for the Tesco store, a condition was placed on the approval that no more than 32% of the floor space be used for 'comparison goods', such as clothing, footwear and household goods. A local resident noted last year that Tesco were in breach of this condition and filed a complaint with Shropshire Council indicating Tesco had used 38% of their floor space for this purpose since opening in April 2007. In response, late in 2009, Tesco applied for retrospective planning application to approve a 300sqm increase in floor space used for comparison goods. In February, the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England conducted their own assessment and found Tesco to have increased the proportion of floor space dedicated to comparison goods to 41%, 9% more than originally allowed under the Secretary of State's condition. After the most recent planning deferral in April, the CPRE conducted another investigation to find yet another aisle had been converted from food to comparison goods, leading to a possible 43% of the store's floor space dedicated to comparison goods.

**Dr Alan Shrank, Shrewsbury Town Centre Residents' Association** stated: *"Because large supermarkets these days don't just sell food and drink and they can manipulate their prices to undercut their competitors, the restriction on 'comparison goods' sales area was imposed to protect other traders especially those in our town centre. It is disgraceful that ever since TESCO Extra opened in April 2007 it has blatantly ignored the planning condition at the expense of other traders"*.

**Selby Martin, Vice-President of Shropshire CPRE, said:** *"Our interest is in the viability of shops in towns like Wem as well as for rural shops in general. We believe that Tesco's should abide strictly by the conditions imposed by the Secretary of State in his original consent. It appears now that Tesco's have even further increased the proportion of comparison goods provision in their Shrewsbury store. It really is time that Shropshire Council resolved this matter; it has been running for far too long."*

**Dr. Maxwell Winchester, Shropshire Councillor for Quarry and Coton Hill Ward** said: *"I am very disappointed in Tesco, but not surprised to see them playing the system for over three years now. Their continual request for deferral shows that they know they are guilty of breaching the planning condition and putting more town centre businesses at risk by predatory pricing against them. Their continual increase of floor space dedicated to non-food goods suggests that they are now enjoying displaying how easy it is for them to bully local authorities. I have a number of cases of smaller, locally-owned retailers and businesses who have had enforcement action taken for*

*minor breaches to planning applications. I am sick of seeing locally owned businesses punished while multinationals are favoured in the planning process across the country. I think it's about time we saw action taken against Tesco like we would any other retailer in town. This is a landmark decision for Shropshire Council, which could see the end of Shrewsbury as we know it".*

**John Clayton, Chairman of the Board, Shropshire Enterprise Partnership** stated: "When planning permission was granted following a Public Inquiry, the limit of 32% was imposed by the Secretary of State because it was accepted that the out of town Tesco Store would adversely impact shops in the Town centre. It is astonishing that Tesco's cynical and flagrant breach of the condition has not been stopped immediately by Shropshire Council using the powers entrusted to it - as otherwise other traders are placed at a competitive disadvantage. There is a danger that a local planning policy vacuum is allowed arise in which other 'out-of-town' businesses 'would have to follow suit and seek planning permission in a 'free for all' to the detriment of the investment required in the Town centre".

**FOR FURTHER ENQUIRIES, PICTURE REQUESTS OR INTERVIEWS, CONTACT:**

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