

Warrington Borough Council  
Planning Policy and Programmes  
New Town House  
Buttermarket Street  
Warrington  
Cheshire  
WA1 2NH

Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd  
Coventry Store Support Centre  
Draken Drive  
Ansty Park, Ansty  
Coventry  
CV7 9RD

20 September 2017

Dear Sir/Madam

#### **REPRESENTATIONS TO PREFERRED DEVELOPMENT OPTION CONSULTATION FOR THE LOCAL PLAN**

I write on behalf of Sainsbury's Supermarkets Limited in connection with Warrington Borough Council's current consultation on the Preferred Development Option for the emerging Local Plan. Sainsbury's have a number of stores within the Borough and have a vested interest in the success of delivering a new positive Local Plan for the area.

Having reviewed the Preferred Development Option consultation material, we have identified a number of concerns in respect to the direction of the Plan. Principally, the Preferred Development Option document at paragraph 5.14 includes for the City Centre Masterplan to be embed into the new Local Plan.

The City Centre Masterplan has significant implications for the east of Warrington City Centre, where the Sainsbury's supermarket store on Church Street is located. The below extract taken from the City Centre Masterplan shows the eastern side of the city centre. The location of the existing Sainsbury's supermarket is identified by the blue star shown.



Figure 18. Town Hill & St Elphin's Urban Village – Masterplan Brief.

The Masterplan identified the Sainsbury's site as part of the Eastern Gateway area. It identifies the area for a comprehensive redevelopment, predominantly to accommodate residential uses.

The Masterplan fails to take appropriate account of the existing established uses, with no reference made to how the existing supermarket would form part of a redeveloped Eastern Gateway. Sainsbury's have no intentions to relocate the existing Church Street supermarket and have not been party to any consultation exercises to inform the development of the City Centre Masterplan. The masterplan gives no consideration to the realities and complexities on the ground, including the numerous different land ownerships in place. As such, the Masterplan, which the Council indicate will form part of the evidence base for the Local Plan, is unrealistic and presents aspirations which are not deliverable.

Paragraph 173 of the NPPF sets out an obligation for Council's to pay "careful attention to viability and costs in plan-making... Plans should be deliverable". National Planning Practice Guidance amplifies this in stating:

*'Understanding Local Plan viability is critical to the overall assessment of deliverability. Local Plans should present visions for an area in the context of an understanding of local economic conditions and market realities. This should not undermine ambition for high quality design and wider social and environmental benefit but such ambition should be tested against the realistic likelihood of delivery.'*

The requirement for the interests of businesses to be addressed within Local Plans is also identified by the NPPF as an important stage in the plan-making process. Paragraph 155 states:

*'Early and meaningful engagement and collaboration with neighbourhoods, local organisations and business is essential.'*

Paragraph 160 goes on to further confirm this requirement, stating:

*'Local planning authorities should have a clear understanding of business needs'.*

Whilst Sainsbury's continues to recognise the importance of town centre developments, it does not seem to be a good use of resources to enshrine unrealistic development options within the emerging Local Plan, via the City Centre Masterplan in its current format. Sainsbury's would support the objectives for regeneration in and around Warrington, but this process needs to involve land owners and consideration of the existing established uses within the area.

We would suggest that the vision for the Eastern Gateway needs to be more comprehensively assessed before the high-level and ultimately undeliverable approach presented by the City Centre Masterplan is formalised within the Local Plan.

Progressing aspirations for a wholesale redevelopment of the area without consideration being given to the existing established uses, including the Sainsbury's supermarket, would not be a sound approach in Sainsbury's opinion. If there is no realistic hope of a development strategy being deliverable then it is not genuinely a realistic approach at all, and whilst we admire the ambition, we would suggest that the Council should refocus its efforts on plans that maintain the Sainsbury's store and car park in situ, and which make better use of sites in the 'Eastern Gateway' area which do provide realistic opportunities for redevelopment. Sainsbury's would be very pleased to engage with the Council further to explore any such options.

I would be pleased to discuss any element of our representations if this would be helpful.

Yours faithfully



Town Planning Manager

Property Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd