

19/00884/FULL – Development of a Motor Village Car Dealership and Minor Alterations to Tesco Foodstore Car Park – Land Adjacent Tesco Car Park Cornford Lane, Pembury

On behalf of Pembury Parish Council, I write to register their overwhelming and unanimous objection to the above application, which was discussed at this month's Full Council meeting.

- 1) The principal objection relates to the inevitable extra traffic congestion along Pembury Road, which at many times of the day is at full capacity so that gridlock often ensues. The extra vehicle movements forecast in the morning and evening rush hours are very concerning, however we suspect that they underestimate what would occur in reality. With no imminent prospect of improvements to Pembury Road (such as a roundabout at Halls Hole Road junction, or additional lanes), it simply lacks the infrastructure to take more traffic. Traffic generated from the likely future expansion of both Pembury and Paddock Wood, will serve to exacerbate this problem. Any major new developments (such as the Motor Village) along the line of the Pembury Road should not be granted whilst there is an infrastructure deficit.

Since we understand that the emerging Local Plan will contain a Transport Assessment, it is important that the Planning Committee and the Parish Council are given access to the most up to date site specific surveys integral to that Assessment, so that both parties can better judge the likely traffic impact of this proposed development.

We are also concerned about the effect of the resulting extra traffic on other local Pembury roads, such as Cornford Lane and Pembury High Street. Please note that we have contacted Greg Clark M.P. who has recently requested that KCC carry out its own Highways Assessment, not just for Pembury Road but also for the Cornford Lane/Halls Hole Road rat run which tends to suffer whenever Pembury Road clogs up.

- 2) We are concerned about the access to and egress from the site, which will be shared with Tesco related traffic. The roundabouts on the adjacent stretch of Pembury Road are often gridlocked, and we perceive that additional traffic, including large Hendy delivery vehicles and transporters, will struggle and add to the melee.
- 3) It seems inevitable that there will be marked increases in vehicle emissions, both within the site and on its approaches.
- 4) We are not convinced that there will be enough car parking available on the overall Hendy/Tesco site. We anticipate that drivers will inevitably look to park on other streets in the vicinity (in fact this already occurs), causing further obstruction on Pembury High Street and inappropriate parking in nearby residential roads. We are concerned that Tesco customers will find that the spaces nominally reserved for them are taken by Hendy's clients and staff, and the loss of trade will drive Tesco away, despite the supermarket being a major

asset for Pembury. (An associated issue is that the current lack of sufficient parking at Tunbridge Wells Hospital, is encouraging some hospital staff and visitors to park within Tesco's car park or residential roads in Pembury.)

We also note that over 100 parking spaces are included within the red line of the application but are allocated for Tesco customers. Presumably this will entitle the motor dealerships to have a right over those spaces, with the potential to further reduce parking spaces for Tesco customers and exacerbate problem parking in the village.

- 5) Crucially, the land concerned is pre-allocated in the current Local Plan for park and ride, with its aim to reduce traffic congestion into Tunbridge Wells town centre, not a mammoth car dealership complex. (It seems inconceivable that the Planning Dept. could even consider this major application before the draft Local Plan has been published.) Moreover, the site falls within an AONB, and abuts the Green Belt. The sheer scale of the development is inappropriate for the site, and we are concerned about its impact on the AONB, with loss of trees and scrubland parallel with Cornford Lane and towards the A21.
- 6) There is potential nuisance for those living in a rural setting nearby particularly regarding noise from vehicles manoeuvring and workshop machinery used on the site. It would be far better if the development fell within a true brownfield site such as on North Farm, where many other dealerships are sited. (*We note that in another submission it is claimed that there is an economic benefit to Pembury; we do not agree with this, since in reality most of the jobs would be for existing Henty staff travelling to Pembury.*)
- 7) Should the Planning Committee, however perversely, be minded to grant this application, we would wish to seek a significant Section 106 contribution towards highways improvements in the locality. (*We note it has been suggested in another submission that such a contribution be used in part to make the cycle lanes in Pembury High Street permanent, thus removing on-street parking. We do not support this idea, as it would remove essential parking for a variety of residential and business users, who would otherwise be tempted to relocate their vehicles to purely residential side roads*)

In summary, we urge the Planning Committee to Refuse this Application, which we feel is wholly inappropriate for the site, and for Pembury. The Parish Council's position is fully supported by our Borough Councillors and our County Councillor.