

Death of an Unique Shopping Village

The thirty shops and the car wash which comprised the long established popular Bishop Centre Shopping Village have now closed down. The buildings stand empty awaiting demolition.

By a single vote, South Bucks District Council Planning Committee approved the planning application by Land Securities to demolish the Bishop Centre and in its place to build a row of large shops with a giant supermarket at the end.

Ignoring the large number and wide extent of objections, the Secretary of State for Communities endorsed the decision.

The many appeals to local MPs Dominic Grieve and Theresa May brought only formal acknowledgements.

The Council Planning Officers in a 35 page analysis of the more than 1000 pages of documents submitted by the applicant and the more than 500 pages of objections had recommended that the application be refused.

Objections had come from:

- Taplow Parish Council, Burnham Parish Council, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council, Slough Borough Council
- The Crown Estates, Slough Trading Estate, Nicholsons Centre Maidenhead, Kings Triangle Maidenhead
- Hitcham and Taplow Society, Burnham High Street Association, Maidenhead Civic Society, Burnham Fifty and Beyond Group
- More than 100 residents of Taplow, Burnham, Dorney and Maidenhead

Objectors had voiced concerns for future traffic problems, effect on nearby shopping areas, loss of specialist shops, addition of yet another supermarket, loss of local employment, noise, lighting and traffic impact on local residents, and inaccurate traffic assessments.

To address these concerns, the South Bucks District Council has set out a list of 49 conditions to be met by Land Securities. The list comprises 2 which must be met before any demolition is done, 11 which must be met before any other work starts, and 36 which must be met before the new shopping centre is allowed to open for business.

An important condition is that "prior to commencement and occupation of the development" Land Securities must make the payments of £865,000 it had offered if the Planning Application was approved:

Taplow Parish Council	£100,000
Burnham Parish Council	£240,000
Cycle Path	£185,000
Thames Valley Adventure Playground	£50,000
Hag Hill Rise Playground	£65,000
Road works	£50,000
Community Assistance Fund	£50,000
Public Art	£125,000

Perhaps a sculpture will be commissioned to dominate the Bath Road: "Satan of the South" to rival the Angel of the North?

Karl Lawrence