

# **DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT**

## **Prepared in Support of a Planning Application for Installation of New Shopfront And Signage at**

**TESCO EXPRESS, 23 SWAINS LANE, DARTMOUTH PARK, N6 6QX**

### **DESIGN**

#### **1. Introduction**

This design and access statement is prepared in line with new Government Guidance on Changes to the Development Control System (DCLG Circular 01/2006)) which requires such statements to be provided with most planning applications. It is also been informed by Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) Guidance on Design and Access Statements.

It is considered that the small scale and nature of the proposed changes at the above property are such that many of the standard design considerations outlined within the CABE guidance are of limited relevance to the application. However, for completeness they are all briefly noted within.

In addition, we attach a copy of a Generic Access Statement prepared on behalf of our client by Stace Project Management. This outlines how access issues are considered by Tesco depending on the different circumstances of each retail site. This should be read in conjunction with this Design and Access Statement which is prepared at the planning and design stage of the application scheme proposal.

#### **2. Use**

The current proposal relates to the installation of a new shopfront and signage to an existing Tesco Express neighbourhood foodstore at 23 Swains Lane, Dartmouth Park, N6 6QX. Photographs showing the existing shopfront and signage accompany the planning application.

The Tesco Express foodstore is an appropriate and beneficial use within this parade of shops and provides a valuable service to the local community.

### **3. Amount**

No new floorspace is being created. The size of the shopfront is directly proportional to the amount of floorspace it contains and therefore is considered entirely acceptable. The shopfront and signage proposals have been designed to improve and simplify the appearance of the retail unit and thereby employ only the minimum detailing, advertising and window treatment necessary to perform key functions (e.g. to inform, screen etc).

### **4. Layout**

The internal layout of the retail building is not a relevant consideration of this planning application. The layout of the shopfront remains essentially the same, with the most significant changes being in respect of the materials, removal of 'clutter', dimensions of glazing panels and finishing. It is proposed that the entrance doors would become full height bi-parting doors.

### **5. Scale**

The scale of the shopfront remains the same. The proportions of the shopfront overall, including the size of the lettering and clean lines, simplifies the shopfront and draws attention to only those elements which require such attention, namely the Tesco Express fascia sign and small vinyl graphics applied subtly to the glazing panels (opening hours and welcome).

### **6. Landscaping**

No new landscaping is proposed as part of the application proposals as it relates solely to the installation and appearance of a new shopfront. This is considered an appropriate response given the uniform and simple appearance of the pavement in front of the parade of shops and which should remain unobstructed.

## **7. Appearance**

### **a. General Design Principles**

The shopfront and signage improvements proposed for the store are part of a wider improvement programme being undertaken by our client Tesco Stores Limited. Tesco has reviewed the current appearance of its Express stores and obtained specialist design advice to develop specific proposals suited to the locality of each store. However, there are some general principles that apply to most of the 36 London Express stores involved. This includes replacing the strong white background with a dark blue/black; removal of excess vinyls and other 'clutter'; LED illuminated signage with clean and slick finishes; and new design frosted glass panels. Acid etch vinyls are being used to subtly screen the checkouts and other less attractive areas (e.g. storage, chillers etc) from view from the outside.

Shopfronts have been considered in the context of their location on host and surrounding buildings. It is considered that the proposals will enhance the streetscape in these busy commercial areas so that they will have a clear beneficial effect upon their character and appearance. As such we believe the changes will be warmly received by the community.

### **b. The Proposal**

More specifically for this store, the following beneficial changes are proposed.

#### **Proposed changes to shopfront**

The original elevations proposed to remove the transoms on both windows to create simpler, less cluttered appearance to the shopfront. Hugh Miller considered that the removal of the transoms and stall risers would be contrary to the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance on shopfronts and would detract from the appearance of the building and the Holly Lodge Conservation Area.

In response to these comments, the proposals have been amended to retain as much as possible of the existing shopfront features. As a result, the only change to the shopfront that would require planning permission is the height of the entrance doors would be extended upwards to the ceiling. With the exception of the single transom above the double entrance doors, all the existing transoms, mullions and stall risers would be retained.

The existing shopfront would be repainted to match the re-branding of the store, but there would be no changes made to the materials. This change in colour would not require planning permission.

### **Proposed changes to advertisements**

The two existing white fascia signs would be replaced with blue / black signs as shown on the proposed elevations. The proposed change in colour would reduce the brightness and reflectivity of the fascia, and would be more appropriate to the character of the Holly Lodge Conservation Area.

The existing fascia and projecting signs are externally illuminated with lighting troughs. These lighting troughs would be removed as part of the proposals. It is proposed that the fascia sign itself would not be illuminated but that to the individual letters of 'Tesco Express' would be internally lit with LED illumination. It is stated at paragraph 2.9.25 of SPG 2 on 'Development' that internal illumination of lettering only is acceptable within Conservation Areas. This method of illumination was confirmed as acceptable by Hugh Miller in his email of 15th August 2006.

Hugh Miller considered that the proposed metal fascia sign was not in keeping with the design and appearance of the building.

Our client has investigated the possibility of using an alternative material for the fascia sign, but considers this to be impractical, and metal to be the most appropriate material for accommodating the state of the art form of illumination proposed. Furthermore, the Council granted permission for two aluminium fascia sign as part of application reference 2004 / 2096 / A, which was granted permission on the 13th July 2004. The proposed fascia sign is considered to be a vast improvement on the existing signage.

### **Swains Lane Residents Association**

The architect for this project has discussed the proposals for this store with John Herbert of the Swains Lane Residents Association, who supported the proposals. Following their discussion, it was decided that the central pilaster should be reinstated, and the brick stall risers should be rendered and painted dark blue to match the rest of the shopfront. The brick stall risers are not an original feature and were installed by Tesco. It is considered that dark blue stall risers would be more in keeping with the rest of the shopfront.

## **8. Compliance with UDP Policy**

We are confident that the proposal satisfies the relevant policies contained within the Camden Unitary Development Plan 2004 Revised Deposit Draft. In accordance with Policy B1 'General Design Principles', the design respects its site and setting, and seeks to improve the attractiveness of the area. In respecting the form; proportions; characteristics; and materials of the building and surrounding shopfronts, the proposed design complies with Policies B3 and B4 on 'Alterations and Extensions' and 'Shopfronts and Advertisements'.

Specifically, it is stated at paragraph 2.9.25 of SPG 2 on 'Development' that internal illumination of lettering only is acceptable within Conservation Areas.

## **ACCESS**

### **1. General**

The Tesco Express foodstore is an appropriate and beneficial use within this parade of shops and which provides a useful service to the local community including those who less able bodied.

The Express Store concept provides for local convenience mostly for top-up food shopping, accessible to a walk-in catchment. It is therefore very popular for people unable or unwilling to drive or take public transport and which very often includes people with disabilities and the elderly.

Tesco also operate other services such as online shopping and home deliveries to cater for customers who are unable to travel any great distance to carry out the food shopping. In 2004, the Tesco website was recognised in AbilityNet (the UK computing and disability charity) as the only supermarket to have a website meeting the basic disability needs of disabled people.

Tesco also aims to provide fully for disabled customers through such initiatives as holding its themed Customer Question Times each quarter in partnership with disability organisations, to listen and respond to what customers with visual, hearing and physical disabilities tell them.

A generic access statement applicable to the development and use of the full range and type of Tesco stores in the country has been developed by our client and accompanies this application. It provides the framework within which Tesco work to ensure that the needs to the less able bodied are incorporated into development proposals at the earliest opportunity. It is necessary of course to also discuss the particular access considerations and elements specific to this store, as follows.

## **2. Key access considerations**

All potential users, no matter what their ability, age or sex can easily enter the Tesco Express foodstore and carry out their grocery shopping.

Whilst alterations to provide a modern and more attractive shopfront and signage are being proposed, the general layout of the shopfront including maintenance of the existing access-point, is to be retained in its current location.

The new entrance doors would provide a level access to the store and therefore is accessible to all including those less able-bodied. These would be double doors to allow ease of access.

The doors are full height automatic doors which would meet DDA requirements and facilitate uncomplicated access and egress without the need to negotiate handles etc. The internal layout of the store is dealt with under building regulations and is elaborated within the generic access statement.

## **3. Appearance and safety**

In respect of access and disability considerations, we consider that the two most important elements are to ensure that sufficient signage is present to inform and advise customers of where to find things (including entry) whilst being appropriate in design and appearance terms; and, also that the environment is safe and accessible for all. The proposal achieves this by removing excess 'clutter', whilst retaining the minimum needed to direct, advise and inform customers. The small number of vinyl graphics to be positioned onto the glazing (the trading hours, welcome and acid etch security vinyls) would also provide the useful function of alerting partially sighted people of the presence / potential danger of windows.

#### **4. Compliance with UDP Policy**

We are confident that the application scheme is fully compliant with the relevant policies in the Camden Unitary Development Plan 2004 Revised Deposit Draft. In accordance with Policy B1 'General Design Principles', the design would be safe and accessible to all.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

We consider that the proposal would be a great improvement on the existing situation and would in no way harm the appearance of the building or streetscene or have any adverse impact on public safety.

Furthermore, it is considered that the proposals are accessible and inclusive and that the store will continue to provide a high quality service for all its customers in addition to meeting the more general design and appearance objectives.

It is hoped that the Council and the general public can also be satisfied that the proposed changes are wholly beneficial, making substantive visual improvements to the Holly Lodge Conservation Area.