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The Andover Advertiser  
Advertiser House  
24-32 London Street  
Andover,  
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Dear Editor

As Tesco PLC is proposing to build an 850,000 sq ft mega-shed on the former Andover airfield, and is citing its 900,000 sq ft 'Lichfield' distribution warehouse (which is actually not in Lichfield at all, but in my village of Fradley) as its benchmark site, I thought local residents should be warned about how the arrival of Tesco in Fradley has blighted our lives.

It has left us with a nightmare situation, because 200 HGVs a day drive towards it and 200 drive back out, plus staff cars belonging to 700-800 employees. All of that is additional to HGVs visiting other large distribution warehouses in Fradley Park. Nowadays we can hardly see Fradley for HGVs and it should be renamed 'Lorriesville'.

Every time we venture out onto our roads we face major hazards, because infrastructure to support the additional Tesco traffic was not in place before it opened and it still isn't complete. We were promised improvements to the Hilliards Cross junction onto the A38, widening of the roads leading to Tesco and A38 signage directing lorries in the right direction, but work on these has been pitifully slow.

The A38 leading to and from Hilliards Cross is horrendously dangerous, yet the district council tells us that the funding isn't currently available to deal with it. Perhaps it will take a major accident to force the issue.

Foreign drivers, because they cannot read English signage, regularly get stuck in our narrow residential roads and country lanes, and when they try to turn back they damage kerbs and gardens and sometimes cause accidents. Residents frequently have to rise during the night to redirect lost drivers to Fradley Park.

No lorry park has yet been provided, so juggernauts park up overnight close to residential areas, where both morning and evening they block the progress of car drivers and the school bus. Under the Road Traffic Act 1998, sections 19 and 22, it is illegal for vehicles of over 7½ tonnes to park on grass verges, yet the police refuse to do anything it because they know that they would then park on the road.

A genuine problem that the police have in relation to a foreign driver is that he probably can't speak English, so they have to arrest him and hire an interpreter. That costs £100, following which the driver might only get a fixed £60 penalty. He's probably been parked up for 5-6 hours during the process, and then he'll be on a ferry that same night and the police will never see him again..

The parish council continues to raise all these issues with Tesco, the haulage companies, the developers and the district and county councils, but all we get are empty promises. We don't have the upper hand, so they largely treat us and our parish council with contempt.

Various options involving multi-language or pictorial signage, colour zoning, weight restrictions and even a name-change for the industrial park have all been discussed, but the authorities have usually responded with a variety of excuses for inaction.

We are now at last being promised a lorry park, colour zoning and double yellow lines, but have had to wait years for such changes to occur. The situation should never have been allowed to reach this stage in the first place and the arrival of Tesco has vastly exacerbated the problems we started with.

All of the above has seriously affected the quality of life in Fradley, Lichfield and surrounding villages, yet the Government in its infinite wisdom now seems to think that, because we have a WW1 airfield, this besieged little village might be the ideal location for an 'eco town' called 'Curborough'. They seem oblivious to the fact that two thirds of it is covered with distribution warehousing and that we already have insurmountable infrastructure problems. If we end up on their final list we would have an additional 15 years worth of construction traffic, followed by cars emanating from 5,000+ homes.

As you can imagine, our residents are reaching the end of their tether, because Fradley seems to have become the dumping ground of the Midlands.

Over the last 20 years I have seen the rural village in which I was born sold down the river by councillors and I would strongly advise the residents of Andover to fight hard against the advent of a Tesco warehouse. It could well be the thin end of the wedge for your area.

Yours sincerely

Jan Green  
Secretary of FACT (Fradley Against Curborough Town).