

Little consultation at Coors meeting

Sir,

The exhibition concerning the future of the Molson Coors sports ground at the end of November consisted of little more than a few presentation boards with misleading messages about what a supermarket on the site could consist of.

There was a lack of expert knowledge, with the handful of 'experts' from Vale Retail and Kinetic PR struggling to keep up with the barrage of questions and concerns from the local community.

The lack of a detailed plan did not help matters, with confusion over exactly where the sports facilities would be situated on Anstey Park and a 'picnic site' cleverly placed where previously a petrol station had been suggested. The only means of putting opinion forward was to write comments on a slip of paper, not large enough to gauge proper opinion, and place it in a non-confidential box for all to read.

Not once were people asked what particular supermarket they want-

ed in Alton, or indeed if a second supermarket was strictly necessary.

The most obvious 'spin' at the exhibition was a message stating the 'only' group of people who would be inconvenienced by a supermarket on the site was the football club who fully supported the plans.

Clearly, the hundreds of local residents, schools, college, nursery, surgery and businesses don't feature highly in the minds of Vale Retail and their PR company.

Another major omission was any reference to or knowledge of the covenant that exists on the Coors site which specifically prevents the kind of development that Coors/Vale Retail are proposing.

The words repeatedly

heard were "we are at a preliminary consultation stage and nothing is set in stone".

Indeed, nothing is set in stone, and nothing in the form of a sensibly considered and thought-out plan was made available to visitors. How can the intelligent people of Alton be expected to comment on plans that have no substance?

ARG wonders whether the multitude of comment slips will be considered, analysed and reported upon, many of which were visibly against a supermarket on the Coors' sports ground site.

ARG representatives spoke to members of the public as they left the consultation and the majority feeling was that three out of four people were against a supermarket development on the Coors' site and appalled at the shambles of a consultation.

A few were enthusiastic about a second supermarket in Alton,

but it was not clear whether they had any preference over the Coors or the Mill lane site.

Some said they wanted to see housing developed on the site, but a large proportion of people actually raised the question: "why do we need to develop anything on the Coors land- why can't it remain as a sports and This, as ARG sees it, is the ultimate question social club?".

We support a second supermarket in a suitable location, if this is something that Alton town council and the people of Alton deem a viable requirement.

The Mill Lane development is the only other option currently on the table, which might allow the green land of the Coors Sports and Social Ground to be saved... for the time being at least.

*Julia Hart
Anstey Residents'
Group*