



A TASTE of the future? An artist's impression of the Molson Coors/Vale Retail proposal for a supermarket on the Coors Sports Ground site in Anstey Road. The site and accompanying new sports facilities are the subject of a public exhibition at Alton Assembly Rooms today (Friday) 11am to 6pm and tomorrow (Saturday) 11am to 4pm

Anstey Road back Tesco

ANSTEY Road residents turned out in force to support the Tesco application for a superstore on Mill Lane last Wednesday.

Following an address to Alton Town Council's Planning Committee, it was clear that the Anstey Road Residents Group (ARG) had their own agenda.

Fighting an impending application by a rival store (possibly Asda) on the Coors Sports Ground site in Anstey Lane, ARG had decided to back the Tesco plan, on the premise that the town would probably only support one additional supermarket.

It was made plain that they would prefer to see an out-of-town store on Mill Lane rather than a more town-based supermarket on the Coors Sports Ground in Anstey Lane in the centre of a residential area which, they believe, to be "totally unsuitable".

But it was not an argument that councillors could condone. Having been cautioned by chairman Roger Fitzer against supporting the application "for the wrong reasons", the plan-

ning committee gave it the thumbs down.

While supporting the concept of improved choice and an alternative to Sainsbury's, and despite acknowledging that Tesco had worked hard to try to address previous concerns, members felt the supermarket giant had not gone far enough.

Convinced that Tesco is committed to the development and would fight the case at appeal, members stuck out for further improvements to transport infrastructure, while continuing to echo concerns about over-development and the impact on town centre economy.

For the Anstey Road residents, it was clear that Tesco would be the lesser of two evils.

While stressing that ARG was not "anti-everything", spokesman Graham Hill sought to commend the Tesco application, not just because it would provide competition for Sainsbury's but because, in the opinion of ARG, it would offer three important planning gains.

Firstly, the development of the Mill Lane site would

result in improvements and road safety enhancements to the Mill Lane junction, both with Montecchio Way and the Ashdell crossroads - work that Tesco would pay for.

Secondly, development of the site would address "one of the worst planning blights on the face of Alton".

Mr Hill continued: "This forlorn and derelict site cries out for redevelopment and, as explained in the Tesco application, the soil itself is contaminated from diesel oil leakage. If approved, the Tesco project would provide for the clean-up and sensible redevelopment of this brown field site.

"It seems possible to us that this neglected corner of Alton is in the last-chance saloon."

Thirdly, ARG supporters welcomed the opportunity, offered by Tesco, to join up the cycle route across Alton and into Holybourne.

While appreciative of ARG's input, councillors voted once again to object to the application on grounds of unacceptable

overdevelopment of the site.

Although the revised plan had included some improvements to the road system, including traffic lights and right and left-hand turning lanes at the Mill Lane/Montecchio Way junction and the introduction of a right hand turning lane at the store entrance, councillors felt they would be inadequate to manage the significant increase in traffic which the supermarket would attract.

They wanted to see an extension to the turning lanes running from the store entrance to the Montecchio Way junction, and more improvements to Ashdell crossroads, to include footways.

They welcomed the common sense resiting of the proposed bus stops to the vicinity of the store entrance on Mill Lane.

But there was still real concern over the impact of an out-of-town store on the town centre retail economy and councillors were keen that a Section 106 Agreement should seek funds to mitigate the effect.