



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

23 April 2008

To the constituents of Knowsley North and Sefton East

Dear constituents,

Re. The Proposed Regeneration of Kirkby Town Centre

The proposed Tesco Everton development of Kirkby town centre represents a significant opportunity for Kirkby and wider Merseyside.

As an MP I have no formal role in the planning process. However, I believe I have a duty to ensure that concerns of residents are addressed and I have met a large number of residents' groups recently with that aim in mind.

There are a range of opinions in the town and it is sometimes easy just to hear the small but very vocal hardcore opposition. By contrast, a large number of residents, although they have concerns, recognise the need for regeneration. I was most struck by the fact that even those opposed to the Tesco/Everton proposal stress the need to breathe new life into the town.

I have given a great deal of thought as to whether or not I should request the Department for Communities and Local Government to call in the application. If this were to happen, it would leave Kirkby in limbo for at least a year and it could even jeopardise the whole project.

The last few weeks have seen a number of developments which shed considerably more light on the proposals and Tesco has made a number of commitments that will bring real benefits to local people:

- **Guaranteed jobs for local people** – the new Tesco Extra store will provide 700 jobs for long-term unemployed people in Kirkby. This will reduce the number of local people claiming Job Seekers Allowance by at least 25% and a similar number of new jobs is expected from other parts of the development.
- **Traffic and transport management** – the proposals include a 4,500 space Park & Ride scheme, additional transport options including coach, buses, trains and walking routes. At least £10million will be spent on improving road junctions and a residents-only parking scheme.
- **The Merseytram** – these proposals have revived the prospect of a new Merseytram that will benefit all in Kirkby.
- **Merseyside police** – discussions are underway to locate the police Headquarters for Knowsley in Kirkby.

- **A revived town centre** – an unprecedented £400 million will be invested in Kirkby including the existing town centre, acting as a catalyst for sustained future investment in shops, jobs, houses, transport and leisure.
- **A voice for local people** – the developers, including both Everton and Tesco, have already set up a group to monitor the development to respond to residents concerns.
- **Plans to re-house and compensate residents directly affected** – there is progress towards a solution for residents who have to be relocated because of the development.
- **A new NHS walk-in centre** – the regeneration plans bring the promise of a new NHS centre based in the heart of Kirkby. Without the redevelopment, it is unclear how this could be funded.

These developments place us in a different position now compared with a few weeks ago.

Putting Kirkby at the heart of Merseyside is good for Kirkby and the sustainable level of retail development which it brings will benefit the whole of Merseyside.

I have listened to concerns raised by residents and it is true that we still need strong safeguards. Opponents of this proposal have been completely unable to give any realistic alternatives that would bring any of these improvements.

This proposal represents a once in a generation opportunity to breathe new life into Kirkby town centre. We have within our grasp the chance to halve unemployment in the area, better healthcare facilities and a new Merseytram.

Knowsley Council has carried out extensive consultations and the most recent planning application reflects the fact that they have listened to what people have said. They have also persuaded Everton and Tesco to make changes that address those concerns.

Kirkby as a town now faces a choice. We can leave the town to stagnate with no realistic prospect of any major regeneration for the foreseeable future.

Alternatively we can choose progress and a new modern successful town bringing new jobs and better facilities for local people.

I choose progress.

Yours sincerely,



Rt Hon George Howarth MP
Knowsley North and Sefton East