

Sainsbury's drop legal bid over superstore plan

By PETER KAY

COMMUNITY representatives this week welcomed a decision by supermarket chain Sainsbury's to pull out of legal efforts to secure approval for a big extension to their store in Millhouses.

The company decided against the unusual step of taking its case to the High Court after seeing its proposals rejected first by the council, then by a Government planning inspector. It said yesterday (Wednesday) it was opting instead to "invest a significant sum of money in improving the current store".

Sainsbury's scheme involved increasing the size of the Archer Road premises by 40% to offer a bigger range of products.

The application prompted strong community protests, largely on the grounds of a predicted rise in air pollution arising from the extra traffic. It was argued that nitrogen dioxide emissions were already "at or above" national guidelines in parts of the area.

Campaigners won the support of councillors before winning the argument after a three-day appeal hearing. Carter Knowle and Millhouses

Community Group feared it would have "Sheffield's biggest hypermarket" on its doorstep.

Its chair, Ted Gunby, said yesterday that Sainsbury's decision is "good news for the neighbourhood.

"The pollution is actually getting worse, not better as Sainsbury's said it would. With around half the traffic on Archer Road going to and from the store, the last thing we needed was a massive extension.

"We are hugely grateful to those councillors on the planning board who were brave enough to do the right thing. Also to the planning inspector."

Councillors overruled the advice of their officers in voting to reject the Millhouses application. Officers had concluded there would be no major problems if a two-storey extension was built.

The council is now talking to community groups about ways of tackling air pollution, much of it from traffic.

Neil Parry, of East End Quality of Life Initiative, said that the Sainsbury's case was significant "in help-

ing the council see that there were many parts of Sheffield where air pollution is a problem and that planning could have a strong role in dealing with the issue".

He added: "Air pollution is a public health crisis. This is a significant victory for the health and well being of local communities in Sheffield and elsewhere. It means that developers have to think hard about the air quality issues raised by developments."

A Sainsbury's spokesperson said: "We can confirm that we have decided to withdraw the appeal against the inspector's decision to refuse planning permission for our proposed extension to the Archer Road store.

"Although our legal advice suggested that we had a strong case, we have instead decided to invest a significant sum of money in improving the current store.

"The store has been serving the local community for around 25 years and our changes are aimed at modernising and updating the store for our customers.

"Other external improvements will be made to the car park and the landscaping around the site."