

19<sup>th</sup> March 2009



## **ASDA DISAPPOINTED OVER UNREPRESENTATIVE FORUM**

Representatives from ASDA have expressed their disappointment over the hastily arranged meeting organized by the Save New Barnet campaign, a group opposed to the regeneration proposals for the old gas works site on Albert Road, New Barnet.

ASDA received a letter of invitation to the meeting a mere eight days prior to the event. Tom McGarry, ASDA Property Communications Manager, said:

“The development team was very annoyed about the late notice. Several of us had previous diary commitments but really wanted to attend and correct some misrepresentations of our case made publicly by the SNB campaign.”

ASDA stated it contacted the SNB campaign noting that it would try to organise a team to present to the meeting, but insisted on having an impartial chair to preside over the event in order to allow for an unbiased debate. However, the SNB campaign pointedly refused.

Tom McGarry added:

“In the light of the late notice and the fact that this is being organised by a campaign group opposing the development, our view is that it cannot be regarded as an impartial, representative forum for sensible discussion on the development. Some local people raised concerns to me that the event was only promoted to Save New Barnet supporters rather than the wider community.”

“Sadly, the campaign group has failed to select an impartial chair and we find that to be absolutely contrary to their stated aim of encouraging ‘effective public consultation’. We do not believe this hastily organised meeting will be productive and are of the view, given the way it has been promoted, that it is simply a SNB campaign meeting.”

The supermarket has offered a compromise to the SNB campaign though, who are thought to be angry that LB Barnet has not organized a public meeting following ASDA’s submission. In order to provide for this, ASDA will organise a series of properly organized focus groups in the area. Tom McGarry said:

“By inviting random members of the public from across the community along to raise awareness and share views this will broaden the feedback and allow for more democratic and open debate. We will invite a representative of SNB to one of these meetings. Should it transpire through this process that a wider meeting would be helpful, ASDA will organise it and advertise it properly in conjunction with the local authority. This is a fairer and more democratic approach.”

**Ends**

### **Further information:**

- Tom McGarry, ASDA Communications Manager  
Tom.mcgarry@asda.co.uk  
01132 418 171 / 07772 226 752