

NEWS RELEASE



**East Hampshire
Conservatives**

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Candidate calls for broader consultation on Alton supermarket plans

Tory parliamentary candidate Damian Hinds is calling for a broader assessment of the pros and cons of supermarket options for Alton.

The various supermarket planning applications - in-progress, expected or possible - could double the town's grocery retail space. One or more new supermarkets would add competition, choice and convenience - and create jobs. But there is also concern that, depending on location, such developments could change the character of the town, and could harm some existing small business retailers.

Damian Hinds is urging Alton Town Council to carry out a "broad, open-minded public consultation" on supermarket development. Such a consultation would take in the legitimate concerns that some have about traffic associated with the proposed Tesco site, and the concerns of local residents about possible development of the Coors sports ground. But importantly, says Damian, "As well as looking at applications individually, it should also look at the issue overall."

A lot of great work goes into things like the Town Design Statement, but they have to cover a wide range of topics. The proposed consultation would home in on supermarkets specifically. "There are two key questions," says Damian. "First, do we want another large-format supermarket? And, if so, what sort? Things to consider could include in-town versus edge-of-town location, low-cost versus big brand, and how important it is to have a petrol station."

Damian Hinds concludes: "These are very big decisions. There can be many advantages from supermarket development, but also possible drawbacks. I know time is tight given the rules on processing planning applications, but I do hope we can have a wide consultation. Whatever ends up happening, let's make sure it is done in the best way possible, with full input from the residents, and retailers, of Alton."

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