

■ ROTTEN BOROUGH ■

TESCO TOWERS

IT'S NOT unknown for a developer to make a second, revised planning application after receiving a rejection. But something odd has happened in the east London borough of Tower Hamlets. Developer

Goldcrest has submitted a duplicate of an application which was *approved* last year.

The scheme is for 208 flats and a Tesco Metro convenience store, in buildings twice the height of nearby properties. It will result in the loss of a car park and, opponents say, kill off local shops and a street market. The Labour council, on the other hand, thinks it will offer "wide-ranging regeneration benefits".

So why the new application? The original scheme was approved without an environmental impact assessment having been made, and local objectors are seeking a judicial review (JR) for that reason. The council freely admits that the second application is a response to the JR action and that it will be considered to avoid "risk or delay" to the project. Although the second application is identical to the first, the council's development control manager, Stephen Irvine, says some 2,000 previous objections "cannot be carried forward". So the planning committee may well meet on 2 April with only an apparent handful of objections. And even if the objectors win their judicial review regarding the first application, they may be obliged to start the whole expensive process all over again for the second. How very, er, convenient.

PS: Tower Hamlets planner Stephen Irvine has featured in the *Eye* before. In 2006 he dismissed residents of Bow, who were upset that developers Countryside Properties had built a block of flats beside their homes without planning permission, by telling them that the belief that all new developments required such permission was "an urban myth" (*Eye* 1165).