# Cheam supermarket's new 'tin conservatory' causes uproar among residents



Residents living above a Cheam supermarket have expressed significant frustration over the installation of a new structure they describe as a ‘tin conservatory,’ built without planning permission. The structure, erected outside Cheam Arena supermarket on London Road, is intended to house fresh fruit and vegetables but has raised concerns among locals regarding access and communication.

The situation unfolded late last week when residents were surprised to discover the fixed structure, complete with wiring, shutters, and lighting, had appeared overnight. According to Richard Johnson, a member of the local residents' association, the new build obstructs direct access to the flats above the supermarket, which previously had an unobstructed path to the high street. He described it as creating an ‘enclosure’ outside the shop, significantly changing the environment for tenants who rely on that entrance.

Johnson explained that one resident experienced a particularly alarming arrival home, finding not only the new structure blocking their front door but also individuals seated right at their entrance. He stated, “The worst thing about it is what you can’t see, which is that you have got people that live in the flats above and their only access is from the front.”

The supermarket’s new owners, Elif Food, who took over earlier this year, built the structure without securing necessary planning permission from Sutton Council. This oversight is especially notable given the council's prior rejection of less invasive retractable awnings for the shop during an application made in 2020, suggesting that any new construction on the site may face scrutiny.

Johnson expressed his disbelief regarding the situation, noting, “You would have thought that if even something like that got a no, then something like what they have done now will obviously be a no.” He remarked that the new structure appeared to dwarfs any previous approvals the supermarket may have had, stating, “What they have done now is far removed from anything really, and they have created an enclosure that has just been dropped in front of the shops.”

Public response has varied, with some residents vocalising their distress online. Becky Dinnage commented on social media, “Oh my, this is horrendous for the people living above.” Conversely, others expressed a more positive view, suggesting that the structure enhances the appearance of the storefront. “I think it looks lovely, much better than seeing boxes of fruit and veg scattered around all over the place,” remarked Gemma Putney.

Co-owner of the shop, Serap Yumak, addressed the concerns, stating the structure was necessary due to a lack of space for storing produce inside the shop. She explained that previous awnings had caused issues, including potential water damage to stock and problems with high winds. Yumak noted, “We needed to act quick,” while not apologising for not seeking prior permission. However, she acknowledged that residents were not informed of the planned construction.

Though they have indicated intentions to apply for retrospective planning permission, the situation remains under investigation by Sutton Council. A spokesperson from the council confirmed that they have received complaints from residents regarding the structure and are assessing the planning history and the nature of the construction. The spokesperson stated, "We understand that residents are concerned, and we are investigating the situation at Cheam Arena as a priority."

Despite these developments, the supermarket plans to change its name to Elif Food Centre and is aiming to obtain an alcohol licence, which marks a broader strategy for expanding its operations within the community. Meanwhile, uncertainties linger regarding the future of the controversial structure that has already drawn divided opinions from local residents.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.google.co.uk/maps/place/Cheam+Arena+Supermarket/@51.379272,-0.213151,15z/data=!4m53m41s0x48760cda3d08e43d:0xaff983f7c3b7f9b78m23d51.3792724d-0.213151> - This link to Google Maps shows the location of Cheam Arena Supermarket, which is central to the controversy over the new structure.
* <https://www.sutton.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-applications> - This Sutton Council webpage provides information on planning applications and could detail past rejections for similar structures, such as retractable awnings.
* <https://www.sutton.gov.uk/news-and-events/news/press-releases> - The council's news page could include official statements or press releases about investigations into the structure at Cheam Arena Supermarket.
* <https://www.google.co.uk/maps/place/Elif+Food+Centre/@51.379272,-0.213151,15z/data=!8m23m11s0x0:0x0> - This map search attempts to provide details on the supermarket's rebranding to Elif Food Centre, though specific information might not be available due to the nature of the search.
* <https://www.gov.uk/search?q=planning+permission> - The UK Government's website provides general information on obtaining planning permission, relevant to understanding why approval is required for structures like the one at Cheam Arena Supermarket.