

Tesco Town Centre Impact Questioned in New Report

Written by LOTS

Tuesday, 27 September 2011 15:57 - Last Updated Thursday, 03 November 2011 13:59

Independent expert analysis casts doubt on the reliability of Tesco's retail impact assessment, a cornerstone of its planning application for an out of town superstore in Ledbury. Tesco's own figures maintain that its proposals will not harm Ledbury's currently thriving town centre but new evidence commissioned by LOTS suggests the opposite.

Prepared by London-based consultants Dalton Warner Davis, LOTS campaigners believe the report shows that Tesco's impact assessment has been massaged to minimise town centre impact and emphasise 'local need'.

The report concludes that any major trade diversion from a town centre already weakened by a poor economic climate should be 'resisted'. The location of the proposed new Tesco store and the scale of the new store relative to the size of Ledbury are raised as important concerns.

Among the key findings, the report argues that:

- Concerns over the location of the proposed new Tesco store and the scale of the new store relative to the size of Ledbury "provide clear policy grounds to object to the Tesco proposals."
- Tesco's claim that the Co-op's future viability would not be threatened, is false. Report author Mary Power, partner consultant at DWD, states: "There certainly are grounds for concern about the viability of the Co-op store, and its partial, or complete loss of turnover would certainly adversely affect the town centre."
- The town centre would lose more than it gains, particularly as "the two main foodstores that effectively help to underpin the town centre would close (one store, Tesco, would definitely

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close and the other, Co-op, would 'probably' close). In a weak economic climate, which has made many town centres more vulnerable, a further reduction in turnover from a large new out-of-centre store could have serious consequences."

- Tesco fails to provide sufficient evidence of need for the size of the proposed superstore and its impact on Ledbury town centre or the potential impact on the closure of both existing supermarkets on Ledbury town centre's vitality and viability.

- The proposed location is not sustainable by all modes of transport and one bus service per hour is not likely to encourage shoppers to travel between the Tesco superstore and the town centre by public transport provision.

'We have been accused of making up figures about the likely impact of an out of town superstore on Ledbury town centre,' said Annette Crowe, chairman of the Ledbury Traders' Association. 'Now we have a completely independent and measured analysis of Tesco's calculations, and the evidence is exactly as we have always said: an out of town superstore would seriously damage our High Street. And this in turn would lead to the loss of jobs and ruin our town's very special appeal to residents and visitors'.

The full DWP Ltd report will be submitted to Herefordshire Council's Planning Department as part of its submission objecting to Tesco's planning application.

As soon as the Sainsbury planning application is submitted, LOTS says that it will immediately commission a further independent scrutiny of the Sainsbury impact assessment on the town centre.