

Questioning LOTS

Written by LESS

Thursday, 29 September 2011 17:44 - Last Updated Thursday, 03 November 2011 13:59

As we at LESS (formally LOTS) are finding it more and more frustrating that even though LOTS ask for comments on such things as naming a town that has not suffered due to an out of town store, nothing we reply with has been allowed, despite items offered that only debunk their assumptions and are in no way personal or offensive; therefore I felt the need to post this here.

1. On the LOTS article "So You're Not Convinced That A Sainsbury Would Be Bad For Ledbury?" the question is asked "Do you know a comparable market town with an out of town superstore that has a [healthy high street](#) like Ledbury's? Let us know!" and despite myself and several others attempting to reply with said towns, not ONE has been published, therefore I will supply one town - Malvern, which according to LOTS is a dead town since the retail park and Waitrose have been built. Malvern as a whole cannot really be compared to Ledbury due to the size difference and the spread difference, however Malvern can be split into three distinct "High Streets" being Barnards Green, Malvern Link and Great Malvern. If LOTS members were to take the time to actually visit any of these high streets they would see a vibrant, buzzing collection of people using the various independant traders and chain stores, this

despite

the retail park, Waitrose, Iceland, Lidl etc. Great Malvern has an independant Chemist, as does Barnards Green .. Malvern Link has two, all have a steady stream of customers

despite

a large Boots in the retail park. There are grocers, butchers, bakers & cafes

all

with customers,

despite

Waitrose & Morrisons. There are two garages in Malvern Link, both with a steady stream of cars using their facilities,

despite

Morrisons petrol station .. the list goes on and on, but I think you get the point. I really do believe that LOTS don't even know their local area very well.

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2. LOTS commissioned an "independent" report that, unsurprisingly, said that an out of town store *could* have an effect on the high street, something Mrs Crowe managed to turn into an absolute "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

could

seriously damage our High Street." - [Emphasis added by me in order to highlight the change from a possible to an absolute.] I would have to ask how independent a report can be when commissioned by a group set up solely to stop

any

out of town store.

3. LOTS have told us on numerous occasions that there would be a 'huge' increase in traffic making its way over the hills into Ledbury either via Top Cross or Knapp Lane that could cause serious damage to our historic buildings.. really? Would you as a resident of Malvern or Colwall travel 5 miles+ to Ledbury to do your weekly shopping when you have Waitrose, Morrisons, Lidl's, Iceland and others either on your doorstep or a few miles away .. I think not. As to the (improbable) increase in traffic, wouldn't any trader relish the idea of more people to attract into their shops, yes it may mean a re-think on their business plans .. but isn't that what business is all about, changing to meet customer requirements? In business standing still is the same as moving backwards.

4. LOTS display on their Save Ledbury website a report about "Local MP Calls for Investigation into Supermarket Petrol Pricing" with a tag line as follows "If Ledbury does get a Sainsbury or Tesco, don't therefore imagine that the prices you pay here will be the same as you'd pay in Hereford or Gloucester. And when it comes to petrol you can bet your bottom dollar that Ledbury motorists will be stung." Does anybody actually pay the same prices for their fuel at any Petrol station in different areas, I know I don't, the BP station in Malvern is more expensive than the BP station in Hereford and as far as I can tell all Petrol selling outlets, be they supermarkets or not, set their prices to the area they trade in. The point is irrelevant and seems to be designed to scare Ledbury residents.

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5. LOTS save Ledbury website again - "Spot The Difference: Sainsbury and Tesco Out of Town are Equally Bad for Ledbury" - the vast majority of this article is pure hyperbole talking about "town centres die when you rip half their retail business out of them" .. I ask where is your proof, show me cast iron proof that says this *will* happen, not 'ifs' and 'maybes' copied from google searches.

6 Front page of the Save Ledbury website - "Apart from local wages, all the wealth generated will be sucked out of Ledbury to corporate headquarters", surely a mute point as the current Tescos, CO-OP, Boots, Spar, One Stop, Seconds Ahead, and a number of independant shops owned by people who are not resident of Ledbury "suck" any wealth generated anyway and I ask if any LOTS member owned two businesses, one in Ledbury, one in Hereford would you use the profits from the Ledbury shop to buy in your home town of Hereford (or vice versa) or would you use the profits generated in each shop to buy only goods in the same town? No .. well in that case you are no different, all be it on a much smaller scale, than any of the above mentioned stores.

The points go on and on, but for now these six will do .. I look forward to replies.