

Sainsbury's -Try Something New Today: Tell the Truth

Written by Save Ledbury

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'Shoddy and arrogant' is how anti-superstore campaigners LOTS have described Sainsbury's planning application for its massive out of town retail development in Ledbury.

'The planning application is riddled with inconsistencies, half truths and blatant lies,' says Rich Hadley, chairman of LOTS adding, 'At every turn, Sainsbury's gives itself the benefit of the doubt – overestimating market demand and growth prospects, minimizing town centre impact, inflating job creation figures, and painting Ledbury as a town which is deprived of choice and value in its food shops. The people who put this document together are living in another world. Do they credit us with no intelligence?'

Among a wide range of flagrant distortions by Sainsbury's, LOTS point to:

1. **Town Centre Impact.** Sainsbury's claim that 'its superstore will not compete against the smaller town centre operators' [\[i\]](#) yet in its own transport assessment, it admits that '46% of the Sainsbury's trade will be drawn from the existing retail facilities within Ledbury' [\[ii\]](#).

2. **Jobs.** The main planning application to Herefordshire Council quotes a wildly inflated 220 Full Time Equivalent jobs created yet buried deep in its 'Interim Travel Plan', Sainsbury's admits: 'Early indications are that around 220 jobs will be created at the Ledbury store, of which 20% (44) are likely to be full time.' [\[iii\]](#) The rest will be short-hours part-time.

3. **Demand.** Sainsbury's continually denigrates Ledbury's food offer in the town centre as 'limited', 'lacking choice', not 'providing a wide range of goods'. Most outlandishly, they claim that in terms of 'foodstore provision... Ledbury does not rival that of the other market towns in Herefordshire' [\[iv\]](#). On the contrary, Sainsbury's own market research shows that 60% 'dislike nothing' [\[v\]](#) about their current food shopping experience with only 10% of people pointing to lack of stock and limited range, almost exclusively focused on the currently badly-run Tesco supermarket.

4. **Public Support.** A consultation by a Bromsgrove PR company provides 'impressive levels of support' for the new store after a worthless and flawed 'consultation exercise' based on entirely unreliable evidence. Yet, when it ran its Household Survey [\[vi\]](#) Sainsbury's declined the opportunity to conduct a genuinely scientific opinion poll into true levels of local support. Likewise, the chance for a Parish Poll into the proposal was quashed at the last moment to the astonishment of local residents. If Sainsbury's is so confident of local support, what did they have to fear?

5. **Linked Trips.** Sainsbury's goes to considerable lengths to prove that there will be no loss of 'linked trips' associated with the out of town superstore in Ledbury. [\[vii\]](#) Yet – in its PR pitch for a new store in Thame Oxfordshire, Sainsbury's spells it out: '[The site] is well located for a new food store as it is close to the town centre, in line with national planning policy, and is Sainsbury's preferred choice rather than pursuing an out of town location. An out of centre store is less likely to encourage shoppers to visit the town centre as part of a 'linked' shopping trip'. [\[viii\]](#)

LOTS has consistently argued that if new supermarket capacity is built in Ledbury, it should be in or very near the town centre in order to maintain the health of the High Street. Ample evidence exists that shows how out of town retail developments drain town centres of shoppers [\[ix\]](#) and siphon off money from the local economy leading to a catastrophic loss of jobs [\[x\]](#)

‘Sainsbury’s are well aware of these issues but have chosen to force ahead with a destructive, crude proposal for a big grey shed on valuable employment land nearly a mile out of town,’ says Rich Hadley. ‘They like to present themselves as champions of fair trade – well why not start by playing fair with Ledbury?’

LOTS’ retail experts will be combing through the various documents and submitting a detailed response to Herefordshire Council within the consultation deadline of 3 February.

References

[i] Retail Impact Assessment 11.4 p61

[ii] Transport Assessment para 4.4.3 p17

[iii] Interim Travel Plan p14

[iv] Retail Impact Assessment 4.23 p 15

[v] Ledbury Household Survey Q4, p 4

[vi] NEMS market research Sept 2011

[vii] Retail Impact Assessment 9.81 p 54

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[viii] www.sainsburys-thame.co.uk/background-anews.html

[ix] Dept for Environment and the Regions, DETR (1998). 'Impact of large foodstores on market towns and district centres'.

[x] Porter and Raistrick, 1998: The Impact of Out-of-Centre Food Superstores on Local Retail Employment, The National Retail Planning Forum, c/o Corporate Analysis, Boots Company Plc., Nottingham.