

## Council Votes Against Sainsbury's

Written by Save Ledbury

Friday, 03 February 2012 10:04 - Last Updated Thursday, 23 February 2012 16:48

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"After a gruelling day and a night of drama in Ledbury's Market House, anti-superstore campaigners are satisfied that Ledbury Town Council has made a correct decision. Voting seven - seven, with the Mayor's casting vote, the Council has rejected the Sainsbury's scheme for an out of town superstore.

The voting couldn't have been closer. Cllr Clive Jupp withdrew before the debate after declaring a 'predetermined' position on the matter. He had earlier in the day circulated an email to fellow town councillors stating his opposition to the superstore. Then Cllr Martin Eager withdrew, although his reasons were less clear.

Seven councillors spoke in favour of the scheme, citing availability of cheap clothes, petrol, and convenience as key factors. Traffic congestion, detrimental effects on the High Street, the size and location of the scheme were raised as concerns by councillors who voted against.

In the end, voting split evenly which allowed Mayor Allen Conway to exercise his casting vote against the plan.

Earlier controversial scenes greeted the balance of public submissions. There were protests which were dismissed by Cllr Conway, after pro-superstore campaigners were allowed significantly more time to put their case than opposers.

Although the vote is not binding on Herefordshire Council's planning committee, which will ultimately be decided on Sainsbury's fate in Ledbury, both sides of the argument felt this to be a crucial signal to send to elected members at the County Council.

'It was a close run thing. Opposing sides are clearly passionate in their convictions, but we are pleased and satisfied that Ledbury's best interests have been served by this decision' said Rich Hadley, chair of Ledbury Opposes Out of Town Superstore."

Thank you to everyone for your amazing support last night too. On the coldest night of the year we gathered about 180 people, at least twice as many as the LESS camp, and created a stunning spectacle as our human banner spelling DON'T RISK LEDBURY shone brightly under dozens of torch-beams. There were unprecedented scenes in the High Street, with a large police presence, and hordes of sight-seeing cars blared their horns and choked the High Street.

It was a matter of regret that the public submissions at the start of the meeting were dominated by a filibuster by pro-Sainsbury's supporters, despite protestations to the mayor. We timed the duration of each speech and established that LESS were given 19 minutes of air time, while LOTS had just 11 minutes. The behaviour of some elements in the chamber was also deplorable with choruses of coughing and yawning as our people spoke, and even a round of booing, ring-led apparently by an individual intimately connected with Galebreaker Ltd.

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In the end, the vote went our way, but it was not an experience we'd want to repeat. Tense doesn't begin to describe it!