

Marlborough and Ledbury Don't Compare

Written by Save Ledbury

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Excitement over Tesco's newish store in Marlborough may be premature.

Marlborough is held up as a town that hasn't suffered as a result of Tesco moving in. But a quick examination of the facts shows that comparisons between Ledbury and Marlborough are simply wrong, according to LOTS (Ledbury Opposes Out of Town Superstores).

1. Before Tesco arrived, Marlborough lacked a budget supermarket - all it had was a small High St Waitrose. Ledbury already has two good size supermarkets (totalling over 20 thousand sq ft) and offering real competitive choice.
2. Tesco Marlborough is considered to be a 'convenience store' and has a retail area of 15 thousand sq feet, a shade larger than Ledbury's current Tesco in Orchard Lane. The proposed Tesco/Sainsbury developments are for 33 thousand sq ft 'superstores' - twice the size of Marlborough's Tesco.
3. Marlborough's Tesco has a car park of 100 spaces, Ledbury's superstores will provide 340 spaces.
4. At 8 minutes easy, safe walk along a flat surface and under half a mile from Marlborough High St, Tesco would sustain 'linked trips' by foot between supermarket and town centre. Ledbury's out of town superstores are twice that distance at .8 mile, up hill at 16 minutes walk. Herefordshire Planners' retail consultants have stated that linked trips by foot are highly unlikely.

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5. Mrs Lisa Farrell championed Tesco's bid for a new supermarket in Marlborough after the closure of a Somerfield store some years back. Rightly, she campaigned on the basis that local families did not have access to a budget supermarket and were forced to travel out of town for their groceries. Marlborough lacked real choice. Ledbury is already well served with budget grocery stores (including a Marlborough-sized Tesco) - and quality independent shops. It offers wide choice.

6. Marlborough is almost exactly the same size as Ledbury. Pro-superstore campaigners' main argument here is that Ledbury's current supermarkets are inadequate for the size of population of nine thousand people and call for a city-size superstore more than twice as big as Marlborough's Tesco.

The two situations could not be more different.

LOTS does not oppose Tesco or Sainsbury. It is opposed to an out of town retail development that will drain shoppers from the High St as has happened in other places like Leominster, Great Malvern and Llandrindod Wells.

Like Herefordshire Planners, and other expert opinion, it is also concerned about the disproportionate size of the proposals. Ledbury simply cannot support a 33 thousand square foot superstore, and two other supermarkets offering over 20 thousand sq feet of grocer retail space, without significant damage to the successful and cherished current High Street of independent shops.

If Ledbury is to have expanded supermarket provision, any developments should be located in or near the centre of town where feasible options exist as detailed in Herefordshire Council's report to planning committee.

www.saveledbury.com

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