

'No Doubt' Sainsbury's will Damage Ledbury Town Centre

Written by LOTS

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Confirmation of the devastating impact on Ledbury town centre of an out of town superstore comes from a new analysis by independent property and retail consultants GVA Grimley.

[GVA Grimley Impact Assessment Sainsburys](#)

Echoing three previous studies into the negative effects of an out of town Tesco superstore proposal, the latest report exposes a range of flawed assumptions and deliberate distortions contained in Sainsbury's controversial planning application for a 30 thousand square superstore, currently under consultation by Herefordshire Council.

'Overall, the proposed Sainsbury's will have a clear significant adverse impact upon the vitality and viability of Ledbury town centre' says report author Mathew Morris, Director of Planning, Development and Regeneration at GVA Grimley Ltd. He says this will involve 'significant loss of trade/turnover, the loss of vitality via linked trips with existing stores, the potential closure of stores, plus the loss of choice and competition within the town centre environment.'

GVA's report confirms that there is insufficient surplus expenditure available from the Ledbury area to justify the proposed new Sainsbury's store.

While Sainsbury's application states that nearly half their projected trade will be diverted from existing Ledbury shops, the GVA analysis shows that this is clearly a deliberate underestimate and that the store will take a much larger proportion of business currently spent in Ledbury shops and supermarkets.

GVA also find that the Co-op will lose about half of its turnover, 'threatening [its] long term viability'.

A range of legal planning issues are also raised which Sainsbury's property developers have failed to address:

- Sainsbury have failed the 'sequential assessment test' that requires them first to look at developing sites within the town centre. They have not seriously considered any other options, only wishing to justify an out an-of-town site of 30,000 sq ft.
- Sainsbury's claim there will be no loss of 'linked trips' to the High Street, i.e. where a shopper visits a supermarket and then goes on to shop in other shops in the town. GVA finds this 'totally unrealistic'. Interestingly, Sainsbury explain this themselves in their own publicity

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supporting their proposed town centre development in Thame, Oxfordshire: “an out of centre store is less likely to encourage shoppers to visit the town centre as part of a linked shopping trip”

It is also noted that Sainsbury's have radically inflated the potential market and growth prospects of the Ledbury superstore in order both to play down the projected negative effect on the town's shops and justify the huge scale of the development. In their report, GVA carefully unpick Sainsbury's bogus assumptions including:

- Sainsbury's absurd claim that it will capture 100% of shoppers in a large catchment area whereby everyone in this area who currently shops in Malvern or Hereford will transfer their total shop to the new superstore – even if they live nearer these towns.
- Beyond that catchment area, covering a huge swathe of Herefordshire and surrounding counties, Sainsbury's assumes it will capture enough shoppers to provide 30% of the superstore's turnover, which is considered to be unrealistic.
- Everybody who lives in Ledbury will never shop for food outside of Ledbury.
- The impact of internet shopping on retail floor space needs has been drastically reduced, while the likely growth in demand for non-food items has been hugely inflated.

The report concludes 'that there is no doubt that the Sainsbury's store will have a significant impact on the health of Ledbury town centre... Council officers have already reached this view in relation to the proposed relocation of Tesco, and there is no valid reason to reach a different conclusion in relation to the Sainsbury's proposal.'

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. Strong evidence exists that shows how out of town retail developments drain town centres of shoppers and siphon off money from the local economy leading to a loss of jobs .

Notes:

1. LOTS is a non-political campaign comprised of local residents, traders and local producers committed to building a strong, diverse and sustainable economy: it opposes any out of town retail developments that may harm the town's unique High Street.
2. LOTS is an abbreviation for Ledbury Opposes Out of Town Superstores – in view of events the campaign has decided to widen its scope to oppose the proposed retail developments by both Tesco and Sainsbury.
3. Campaign news and resources can be found at www.saveledbury.com
4. The size of the proposed Sainsbury's development far exceeds the stated retail requirements

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for Ledbury even taking account of projected population increases for the town over the next fourteen years. (Ref Herefordshire Council PPS4 2010). A big oversupply of retail provision will severely unbalance the successful High Street economy in Ledbury, acknowledged as one of Britain's best.

5. The report was commissioned by the Co-operative Group (the 'Co-op') and has been submitted as a planning objection to Herefordshire Council. The report is appended.