

Planning Application for a Discount Foodstore, Land South of Leadon Way, Ledbury (Application Reference P242783/O)

Update to Retail and Town Centre Appraisal (July 2025)

1. Herefordshire Council (hereafter referred to as 'the Council') originally instructed Nexus Planning in March 2025 to provide advice in respect of a hybrid planning application seeking full planning permission for a day nursery (Class E(f)) and a Class E foodstore, and outline planning permission for the erection of a medical centre, at land south of Leadon Way and east of Dymock Road in Ledbury. The original planning application submission was accompanied by a Planning and Retail Statement ('PRS') prepared by CarneySweeney, dated October 2024.
2. The purpose of the original appraisal report published in March 2025 was to consider the merits of the application proposal in terms of its compliance with retail and town centre planning policy, as set out by the statutory development plan and by the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF').
3. Subsequent to our March 2025 Appraisal, additional information in respect of the cumulative impact position to include the committed Home Bargains store in Ledbury was provided by CarneySweeney, and the Council received 3rd Party representations issued by Stantec on behalf of the Co-operative Group.
4. On the back of receiving the additional information, Nexus then produced an updated note in April 2025 to provide a response which took account of the above additional submissions.
5. CarneySweeney have now provided a further updated cumulative impact assessment to the Council via email in June 2025, which takes into account the updated benchmark sales density for the proposed retailer, published by GlobalData in March 2025.
6. Within their supporting email to the case officer, CarneySweeney provide a comparison of the previously adopted sales density as of December 2024, compared to those which have now been adopted in the latest submission.
7. Importantly, the comparison of the figures indicates that the convenience sales density for the proposed Lidl store will increase from £5,764 per sq.m to £6,902 per sq.m. As noted in our original appraisal, although the foodstore will sell an element of comparison goods, this will be limited and is unlikely to have a material impact on any defined centre. As such, our assessment considers the impact of the convenience turnover of the proposal only. The resultant convenience turnover in the latest submission (excluding inflow) is £6.1m at 2029.
8. Using the above updated turnover, the cumulative impact position at 2029 presented by CarneySweeney at Table 8b on Ledbury town centre is expected to be -4.3% (up from the -4.0% presented previously).
9. In calculating the total impact on Ledbury town centre (see Table 8B of the June 2025 submissions), all of the named convenience destinations are taken account of. This list, as set out by CarneySweeney, is taken from the 2022 Retail and Leisure Study. It is noted that this list includes (amongst others) Abbey Bakery which ceased trading some years ago. As respondents to the household survey provided this as an answer when asked where they last shopped for convenience goods in 2022, then it is likely that there will have been an alternative operator which was locally known as 'Abbey Bakery' at the time of the survey. Should there no longer be a corresponding operator trading in the town centre, it is highly likely that any expenditure directed to that specified retailer at the time of the 2022 Study, will have been redistributed to other businesses in the town centre. As such, we are of the view that the total convenience turnover of the town centre remains appropriate.
10. In any event, the consideration of the acceptability of the proposal on the town centre has been undertaken on the basis of the potential impact on the individual stores in the centre and on the overarching vitality and viability of the centre as a whole. This has taken into account the nature and offer of existing convenience operators in the town centre and the potential implications the proposal could have on these.

11. In terms of the cumulative impact on Ledbury town centre and the associated implications, the latest submissions have not altered our previous conclusions reached within our March 2025 Appraisal or our April 2025 Update Note. For ease of reference, our previous conclusions reached were as follows:
 - a. We are of the view that the town centre is generally vital and viable and although the two edge of centre stores provide important convenience shopping provision for shoppers, the stores and the wider centre are sufficiently diverse and healthy to withstand the level of diversion set out by CarneySweeney and assessed by Nexus.
 - b. We consider that given the proposal's scale, the centre's health, the wider commercial provision within Ledbury town centre and the provision of out of centre convenience facilities from which the proposal will divert trade from, the potential impact of the proposal is unlikely to be significantly adverse. This is principally due to the convenience trade diversion being moderate and the centre being generally vital and viable.
 - c. Furthermore, we are of the view that residents and visitors alike will still need to visit the town centre to meet their wider commercial needs. Overall, we do not anticipate that there will be any material reduction in the vitality of the centre arising from the loss of linked trips related to the proposal (as these may be undertaken by car or may occur at other times).
12. Overall, we do not consider that the marginal uplift in the convenience turnover of the proposal alters our previous conclusions reached. Although there are some relatively high cumulative impact figures presented in respect of individual stores within the centre, we are not of the view that this level of trade diversion will result in a significant adverse impact on the overarching vitality and viability of the centre. This conclusion is reached having regard to the nature of the proposal and the overall offer of the town centre, as we set out above.
13. Taking the above into account, we are satisfied that the proposal complies with Local Plan Policy E5, insofar as we are of the view that it will not have a significant adverse impact on town centre investment or on the vitality and viability of the centre.