

# Lidl launch fresh fight to light up signs on a Midlothian store

Supermarket giants Lidl have launched a fresh fight to light up the signs on a Midlothian store 15 years after they were first rejected as 'garish' by planners.

Midlothian Council has repeatedly refused to allow the store to replace the signs on its Penicuik store with illuminated versions because it is in a conservation area in the town.

However in an appeal to Scottish Ministers, the chain argues that the council allowed the modern store to be built in the area and should have expected them to want signs to promote it.

They say: "Signage is a critical part of the operation of modern retail units to attract customers and, as such, it is critical to support the viability of the retail unit. This is even more significant in this location given that the Lidl foodstore is one of the key stores anchoring the vitality and viability of Penicuik town centre.

"Failure to support the viability of this store will, inevitably, have an adverse impact on the wider health of the town centre."

Lidl first applied for illuminated signage in 2009 after the store was first opened but was turned down.

A planning report from Midlothian Council said that in 2009 Lidl then appealed to Scottish Ministers but the Reporter who investigated their case described the signs, which were installed without permission, as 'garish and overly large'.

They added: "The signage was not considered to accord with the high standards expected in a conservation area."

Lidl applied for illuminated signage at the store again in 2015 and 2017 and was refused permission on both occasions, now they have appealed after another application was rejected.

The current application asks to replace the Lidl signs on the store with new lit-up versions.

Lidl point out that while the town centre store lies within the conservation area it is not near listed buildings and is part of a modern retail park.

They add: "It is clear that the Lidl appeal site makes no contribution to the Conservation Area.

It is significant that the Lidl foodstore was granted planning permission by Midlothian Council in this location within the defined Conservation Area despite being a building of significant size and mass and having, in its own terms limited architectural merit.

"It is clear that Midlothian Council did not regard development of the foodstore in this location as having an unacceptable impact on the character or appearance of the Conservation Area when planning permission was granted for the development."

The appeal is being considered by the Scottish Government

Reporter.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter