Reviewer's report

Title: Is proximity to food retail stores associated with diet and BMI in Glasgow, Scotland?

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Reviewer: leigh sparks

Reviewer's report:

The authors have responded to the various queries from the first round of refereeing, and in the main have done a sound job. They have responded to my comments and have changed the manuscript appropriately. However some of their changes themselves raise questions on my re-reading of the paper. I note these below.

1. I note the change to the title and believe I is the right way to go. However I wonder if it is strictly accurate. The paper tests for proximity to the “nearest store” not “food retail stores”. Should the title be “Is proximity to a food retail store associated with diet and BMI in Glasgow, Scotland?”?

2. The abstract and the background section both start with sentences about “access to affordable healthy food”. However the paper has nothing to say about this topic. Instead the paper is about proximity to a store (any store selling we do not know what). Should the starting point of the abstract and the background both reflect this reality?

3. In the methods section, third paragraph, despite the changes to the description of the stores in the list and study, I remain confused and unconvinced. This paragraph contains a number of gross generalisations and, I believe, errors.

a. The paper conflates organisational form (company) with store format (superstores, convenience stores). A company e.g. Tesco can, and does operate many store formats. So to example superstores with company names is incorrect.

b. General stores (which now include convenience stores) are described as having a very unhealthy mix of products. This is over-general and comes from the poor specification of the stores in the list/paper. The Scottish government for example has a widespread Healthy Living initiative with the convenience store sector (e.g. with the Scottish Grocers Federation) which has changed the product mix (and thus access). This should be recognised and the description amended.

c. The “general stores” category seems to be all stores below 300 sq metres (is this gross or net?). But I am not sure if this is what is meant by the “(< 300 square metres approx)” statement. Is the paper saying all stores below this cutoff are in the general store category? Or not? Does this mean that all stores above this limit are in the supermarket and superstore category. I am sorry but if this is
the case then it is nonsensical. In the same category we would have a 310 sq m Costcutter and a 15000 sq m Tesco Extra. If the paper is simply saying that all convenience stores are below 300 sq m, then despite the reference to IGD, I am not sure this is correct. Maybe it is I am simply confused here – we lack the detail of the definitions used. This needs clarification still. I wonder if the authors should have referred to, and used, the material in the Competition Commission reports of 2000/1 and 2007/8 which set up the two markets approach.

4. In the Discussion section, first paragraph, the first sentence overstates the case when it says “Neither … were there many clear …”. In fact there are few if any.

5. The conclusion section now makes more of a case for a contribution. It now calls for more research into better understanding of the “foodscape” and, following Annie Anderson’s suggestion, the in-store environment. Both of these are worthwhile pursuing, but in my view, also miss the point. We need much better understanding of what people actually do, purchase and eat, within this environment. We need this in terms of stores they use (and other food sources) and also in terms of what they are exposed to. Actual consumer behaviour is the vital link here and needs to be mentioned.

I would rate these as Discretionary (#1,2,4,5) and Minor Essential (#3)

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'