

Waitrose criticised by watchdog after supermarket giant breached order seven times

Waitrose has been criticised by the the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) over seven breaches of an order put in place to stop large grocery retailers gaining an unfair advantage.

The chain, which is part of the larger John Lewis group, breached one of the two orders put in place following the Groceries Market Investigation.

The watchdog said the breaches took place in Bromsgrove, Rustington, Swindon, Daventry, Chester, Notting Hill Gate and Market Harborough.

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Adam Land, senior director – remedies, business and financial analysis – at the CMA, said: “I am writing to express the CMA’s concern that Waitrose has breached one of the two orders put in place following the Groceries Market Investigation.

“As part of our monitoring and enforcement of the order, in February 2020 following breaches of the order by Tesco, the CMA wrote to all retailers within the scope of the order to ask them to assess their own compliance with the order and report to the CMA.

“The results of this work have identified seven breaches of the order by Waitrose since the order came into force (five of which are no longer ongoing, and two that remain ongoing).

“As you know, the order was put in place in 2010 to stop large grocery retailers benefitting from long exclusivity arrangements and restrictive covenants.

“It is therefore a source of concern to the CMA to have found that Waitrose has breached the order on these seven occasions since it came into force.

“I recognise that Waitrose has cooperated with the CMA in taking forward its analysis and is taking remedial action to address the breaches identified.

“However, in my view, these breaches demonstrate significant shortcomings in compliance for a company of Waitrose’s size and standing.”

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