

Tuesday, 3 October 2017

## **Planning Statement**

### **15, Main Street, Market Square, Dickens Heath, Solihull, B90 1UB**

Planning application for the change of use from a photographic studio (A2 use), to a mixed class coffee shop (A1/A3 use).

## Site

The site, as pictured below, lies within Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council and is defined within the Local Plan as a Local Centre. The building was formerly used as a photographic studio (pictured left)(A2 use), and prior to this as a tanning salon (pictured right)(sui generis use).



## Proposed Use

This proposal is to change the existing use for the building from A2 to an A1/A3 mix, facilitating its use as a Costa Coffee shop. This mix is important to note, as different to a standard café that trades solely under A3, it also functions as a retail unit for the take away purchases of hot and cold beverages as well as cold/warmed food. The sale of other comparison goods such as coffee beans and other coffee paraphernalia further contributes towards the A1 mix thereby contributing to the vitality and viability of the shopping frontage. The A3 part of the mixed use relates to the drinks and food items that are consumed on the premises. Various appeal decisions by the planning inspectorate confirm this is indeed the correct usage for such a coffee shop.

The nature of this style of coffee shop means that no primary cooking facilities will be installed, as the only food items served within the premises are pre-manufactured off-site. The only food to be warmed is then the panini which is done by a Merrychef oven behind the servers which does not require any extraction or ventilation.

The above means that we are happy for a planning approval to be conditioned so that no primary cooking facilities are to be installed, allowing for heating of pre-packaged items only. This will therefore restrict any uses of the store as predominantly A3 in the future which could give rise to detrimental impact to the surrounding amenities through noise or smell.

## Local Policy

Under Policy 19 of the Solihull Local Plan, *Range and Quality of Local Services*, it is stated that;

*“Local retail parades and local shops providing for day to day needs, including those serving villages, will be sustained. Proposals for change of use or new development will be granted planning permission where this role would not be prejudiced”.*

As the application site has not traded under an A1 retail use (currently an A2 use and prior to that a sui generis use), there will therefore be no loss of retail through the granting of this application. In contrast, this application will in fact provide a level of retail through its A1/A3 mix that was not present before.

With regards to the role of providing for day to day needs, this is clearly a role that was not provided for with the prior use as a photographic studio. The proposal for use as a coffee shop, in contrast, will provide a useful benefit to the parade and local shops with a day to day facility. Figures published in 2014 in a report by industry analysts, Allegra Strategies, show that British high streets are enjoying significant economic and social benefits brought by the rise of branded and independent coffee shops.

The report draws on research with over 2,000 consumers and local businesses. The Role of Coffee Shops on the High Street 2014 report demonstrates that the presence of coffee shops typically boost local high street economies by 2 to 4% through a combination of increased footfall and dwell time. Footfall studies show that branded coffee shops can increase high street footfall by up to 28%. 52% of consumers interviewed for the study are more likely to shop for longer when there are coffee shops nearby.

## The Role of Coffee Shops on the High Street 2014

Allegra Strategies

### Key findings

- Coffee shops have a highly positive impact on local businesses: 58% of local businesses interviewed indicated that coffee shops attract more people to their business, an increase on 38% in 2010. 43% of local businesses were positive about the contribution of coffee shops to their individual trading.
- Coffee shops create a valuable regenerative effect: 85% of local businesses interviewed agreed that coffee shops improve the viability of the local area, an increase on 76% in 2010.
- Coffee shops play a significant role in driving high street visits: 58% of consumers surveyed had planned to visit coffee shops as part of their trip to the high street. Furthermore, 18% of consumers visited the high street primarily to go to the coffee shop.
- Coffee shops are fundamental to the wellbeing of British high streets: 95% of consumers interviewed feel that coffee shops improve the vitality of the local area.
- Coffee shops produce neighbourhood hubs and foster a strong sense of local community: 85% of consumers state that coffee shops have a valuable role in the local community, an increase from 77% in 2010.

### Future Developments

The report concludes that over the next few years, coffee shops will take an expanded role in local communities and the evening economy. Branded coffee shops and artisan independents will make further efforts to strengthen links with communities with more authentic and locally relevant store designs. The report predicts more widespread partnerships between coffee shops and retail and leisure operators, which will make valuable use of both existing and vacant high street space.

Jeffrey Young, managing director, Allegra Strategies, said: "The report illustrates that coffee shops are helping high streets to evolve away from over-reliance on outdated retail models to embrace the demands of a more experience-led British consumer. Coffee shops offer much more than just refreshment, providing a space for community events and mobile working, while boosting local employment opportunities."

Jason Cotta, managing director, Costa Retail UK and committee member of the Future High Streets Forum, added: "Coffee shops have effectively become more than just a place to enjoy a hot drink. They play an integral role in terms of the social and economic development of the high street; from employment opportunities to providing friendly community meeting hubs. As a panel member of the Future High Streets Forum, we have been working closely with local councils to revive and develop their high streets. I welcome the findings of this report which reinforces the role of coffee shops in driving footfall to the high street, as well as helping to improve the viability of the area."

This information was supplied by Allegra Strategies and further information can be found at [www.allegrastrategies.com](http://www.allegrastrategies.com). Future Development information by Intelligent Business Systems news.

**The Allegra report was developed from:**

## Consumer research

- 1,599 online interviews with consumers from across the UK
- 343 face-to-face interviews with consumers inside branded and independent coffee shops in 6 UK case study locations (Putney, Shoreditch, Edinburgh, Leeds, Sutton Coldfield and Cardiff)
- 16,452 online consumer interviews (Allegra Project Café13 UK)

## Business research

- 119 in-depth face-to-face interviews with business owners and managers of local businesses in close proximity to coffee shops in 6 case study locations (Putney, Shoreditch, Edinburgh, Leeds, Sutton Coldfield and Cardiff)
- 24 telephone interviews with industry leaders from branded chains, independent coffee shop owners, planning experts, town centre managers and other relevant specialists
- 100+ coffee industry leader interviews (Allegra Project Café13 UK)

**About Allegra Strategies**

Allegra Strategies is a London-based strategic research consultancy recognised as a global leader in the coffee shop sector. The company is best known for its definitive Project Café reports on the European and UK coffee shop markets. Allegra has accurately predicted trends in the UK branded coffee shop market since 1999. The report is considered by the industry as 'the bible' of the coffee sector. In December 2013, Allegra created The World Coffee Portal, the premier global information platform for senior decision makers across the coffee sector. Building upon over 15 years of unparalleled coffee expertise from Allegra Strategies, the World Coffee Portal delivers strategic analysis on some of the most important coffee markets across the world.

**Coffee Shops in the Evolving High Street**

Deloitte Consumer Review, November 2013.

Research from Deloitte also reveals the importance of the high street to UK consumers for leisure activities, such as dining and drinking out. Over half (52%) of consumers surveyed say they prefer to go to their local high street for a visit to a coffee shop, compared to just 18% at in-town shopping centres and 11% who go to an out-of-town shopping centre.

The research shows those high streets which maintain the right mix of shops, while offering experiences and convenience that cannot be replicated online remain popular. This is particularly pertinent as, despite concerns around the demise of the high street, it is still consumers' choice of destination for top-up groceries, health and personal care and clothing and footwear.

The research and percentages featured in the Deloitte Consumer Review were based on a consumer survey carried out by independent market research agency, TNS. The survey was conducted online with a nationally representative sample of over 1200 UK adults aged 18+.

## National policy

Within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) it is recommended that planning should “proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, businesses and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs.”

Furthermore, the proven increase in vitality and viability given through the introduction of coffee shops such as Costa directly responds to the requirement of Councils to “recognise town centres as the heart of their communities and pursue policies to support their viability and vitality”.

It should also be noted that where independent businesses exist near to the proposal site and that the applicant is not an independent operator does not in itself demonstrate harm. Even the existence of any other similar units of either independent or franchised does not weigh against such a proposal as section 2, paragraph 23, bullet point 4 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that local planning authorities should promote competitive town centres that provide customer choice and a diverse retail offer.

## Portas review

This is an Independent review carried out in 2011 looking into the Future of our High Streets, commissioned by the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister. Within the report it looks at how retailers need less shops due to the increase of online transactions and that the consumer is looking for more than just retail when visiting a town centre, including leisure and entertainment facilities such as that proposed in this application.

The report goes on to state how the high street should include a diverse range of social, commercial and meeting places, again such as that proposed.

In the Government response, it was emphasised to the Local Authorities how they should manage local needs and improve their High Streets, an important part of which is through providing uses such as coffee shops to improve the vitality and viability of the street.

## Design / Access

The counter has been positioned near to the entrance door for ease of serving both sit-in and take-away customers. The main seating area will be sited directly opposite and to the rear of this. In order to provide an active frontage, the main facilities of staff areas, storage and dishwash rooms have been positioned to the rear of the unit.

In order to increase the shops facilities for customers, a new toilet is proposed which will be fully wheelchair accessible, inclusive of baby change facilities. Level access to the shopfront is already existing.

Other facilities to assist customers will also be installed on site, including assistance for the mobility impaired, facilities for the hearing impaired, induction loop available, staff assistance, space for parents with pushchairs, and assistance for the visually impaired.

In addition to the above, a redecoration to the existing shopfront is proposed with an associated signage application.