

In addition, there are two other large Costa Coffee establishments within a 1 to 2 mile radius of Dickens Heath.

The applicants may well call on the potential development within Dickens Heath to substantiate their business plan. In reality the development of the previously stalled Garden Squares East will bring an extra 100 or so residential units, within 100 metres of Main Street. The new development just further along Dickens Heath Road is already well established and any potential further development will be subject to the local development plan – still two years away from adoption. Therefore, any increase in footfall on Main Street will be limited and certainly not bring lots of customers for coffee or tea. Custom for Costa Coffee will be at the expense of the existing providers.

The recent Shirley BID proposal seeks the balance of businesses, encompassing independent businesses having a loyal customer base and the boroughs own economic plan recognises the role independent businesses have to play in

A DTZ report commissioned by Solihull Council (when determining the town centre proposals) recognised *'the growth of major operators have a serious impact on small retailers, many of which are independent'*. Furthermore, the councils own and recent Shirley Economic Plan 2016 – 2026

(<http://eservices.solihull.gov.uk/mginternet/documents/s42498/Appendix.pdf> )

highlights, in *A future vision for Shirley* – the need for *'Creating an appealing, and vibrant centre for all businesses, the community and local residents – A destination place for specialist independent retailers'*. This principle should apply to all our High Streets.

I feel it should also be recognised that allowing the application, and therefore embedding the change of use of the premises, we then have the premises already allowed for restaurant type services, thereby adding to the already number of restaurants in a very small 'High Street' and possibly reducing day time footfall even further. If indeed the application succeeds and either Costa Coffee or Coffee Cloud is forced to close we then have the possibility of more restaurants and less and less professional businesses (as was originally intended for Main Street). Only time will eventually prove this, but by then it will be too late.

This application is far different to the Costa Coffee application that was approved on Knowle High Street in 2011 (application 2010/2067/S refers). Here we had a vibrant High Street with a substantial footfall and a distinct lack of coffee type shops. It was also noted in the report to Planning Committee the previous occupiers of the said premises were moving a short distance away along the High Street. In fact 'Carlys' did just that and remain a successful business to date. The circumstances of the Dickens Heath and Knowle applications are far removed and although many of the arguments in objection for both are similar, the sheer size of the businesses in Knowle and customer base/footfall enables business to succeed – there is enough custom for many businesses. This is not the case in Dickens Heath.

Members may note the severe problems with car parking in and around Dickens Heath. This does cause problems for businesses, with especially restaurants losing