

# **New Heart of Shirley?**

**An assessment of potential impacts on the community and of  
justification for the proposals**



**A report by Localise West Midlands  
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**Localise West Midlands  
*Local economic solutions for sustainability*  
54-57 Allison Street, Digbeth  
Birmingham B5 5TH  
0121 685 1155**

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## **ENDORSEMENT**

The Retail Enterprise Network, led by Manchester Metropolitan University, is funded to protect and promote diversity in the retail sector. As a network that works across Europe it works with partners to ensure that our retail landscape serves the needs of all consumers and represents a healthy balance of different retail providers.

We were very pleased to be contacted by Localise West Midlands, to assist them in the compilation of their research report about retail provision in Shirley. We were very impressed in terms of the content, the thoroughness of the report and also its balance; it has evidently been very well researched. We have assisted by providing access to previous research studies and by critically reviewing the content and sharing our comments with the author. Our input is reflected in the finished report.

In addition, we also support all of the recommendations made - in terms of ensuring that future retail provision represents the economic, social and environmental priorities of the local community.

Cathy Parker  
Director and Principal Lecturer in Retail Management  
Retail Enterprise Network  
Manchester Metropolitan University Business School

## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

### Scope of this report

This report initially came from conversations between Localise West Midlands (LWM) and the campaign group against the New Heart of Shirley development, Keep Shirley Alive (KSA) and with other members of the Shirley Town Centre Partnership. However, the report is not being conducted to a KSA brief, nor are LWM being paid for the report by KSA or anyone else, although the Town Centre Partnership, who have expressed an interest in this research, may perhaps make a small donation in recognition of the work we have done. LWM is undertaking this report on account of its own objectives in local economic development, and to its own brief. LWM do not have a background in traditional retail analysis but do have a history of work on local centres and the social and community aspects of economic activity. This report is intended to reflect these aspects.

The report covers:

- Potential impacts of the proposed development, including relevant guidance and research
- Case studies of similar developments and/or superstores
- A summary of the benefits of an approach to economic development that promotes independent local trade, and related information on Shirley centre
- Need for the development, guidance concerning need assessment, community involvement and the consultation process
- Conclusions and recommendations

### The independence of the report

LWM promotes a redressing of the local/global balance in economic activity. Local economic diversity, and therefore a general presumption against the monopolising of retail by a few major chains, is naturally a part of this (see page 14). However, whilst the New Heart of Shirley plans do include multiple retailers, this might undo previous damage to the town centre and thus support and strengthen the local economy. All reports have underpinning values and assumptions, and what is important is that these are transparent. LWM are more independent than many sources of information on this development because we have no financial or ulterior interest in the outcome.

LWM's main concerns in this project are local community control and the strengthening of the local economy. It is these concerns that have provided the brief for our report.

### Description Of The Plans And Process

The plans, known as the Heart of Shirley development, are said to come from the identification of an "underlying weakness" in Shirley town centre in the Hillier Parker report undertaken in '96. The proposals including the foodstore element are referred to in the draft Unitary Development Plan.

The plans are for a mixed use development consisting of a 42,000 square foot superstore<sup>1</sup>, two public squares, an underground car park, residential apartments, offices and around 15-20 retail units amounting to 60,000 sq ft.

More information including architects' plans can be found at [www.shirleyadvance.com](http://www.shirleyadvance.com).

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<sup>1</sup> *A superstore is a retail outlet specialising in grocery sales, although not exclusively selling food of between 25 - 50, 000 ft. Above 50,000ft becomes a hypermarket.*

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

*This summary should not be taken out of the context of the conclusion sections it draws from: namely the summary of potential impacts on page 18, the conclusions on need on page 27, the consultation conclusions on page 33, and the recommendations on page 35.*

### **Potential impacts**

Our summary of potential impacts can be found on page 18. Our first conclusion is that much more information is needed – such as origin and destination analysis of existing centre users and Shirley residents - and some of it could have been provided at an earlier stage. However, from the information and case studies we have:

*Assuming the Partnership wish to maintain and enhance a) a vibrant and community-based town centre rather than a shopping mall, b) a healthy mixture of independents and multiples in both convenience and comparison retail c) increased footfall for vitality and viability, then our conclusion is that despite some potential positive effects the Heart of Shirley proposals will have a negative overall effect on these aspects.*

*If the superstore in question replaces an existing store further out of the centre of Shirley, and is considerably smaller than the proposed 42,000 sq ft, then impacts are likely to be more positive.*

*If town centre vitality and viability is simply measured in terms of expenditure and footfall, regardless of money flows and impacts on existing areas, individuals and retailers, then the Heart of Shirley proposals will have a positive overall impact on the centre regardless of the operator chosen or complementarity of new retail. (quoted from p20)*

Although there is encouragement in planning guidance of edge-of-centre developments, there may be areas of non-conformity with planning guidance (see pages8-9)

Nationally there is a UK-wide lack of evidence on impacts, particularly on edge-of-centre large developments, which should be addressed to see whether planning policy guidance conforms to its own objectives.

### **Need**

The reports said to identify the need for the new development are out of date. Shirley's state of health has not been measured, and relative to many centres seems reasonably good. Centres of this size in general have suffered the impacts of previous planning policy, so in this sense there could be a need to draw trade back to the centre; however no analysis has been done of what would draw people back in such a way that they would also use the existing centre. The need for each element of the Heart of Shirley proposals has not been identified. It is hard to see how a need for another superstore could be justified as there is over-provision. Planning guidance and common sense advocate a more thorough town centre strategy and more community involvement at the planning brief stage and in identifying what a centre needs. See below and p27.

### **Proactive, plan-led approach and community involvement**

Draft planning guidance on retail (PPS6) and statements in other regional and national guidance advocate a plan-led and proactive approach to planning for retail, directed by local people's wants and needs. This process has been missing from the Council's process and

has laid them open to the sort of accusations they have been experiencing, such as that they are driven more by the capital receipts than by the wellbeing of Shirley. Retail specialists have found the lack of support for the Heart of Shirley proposals significantly lower than for similar developments elsewhere.

### **Consultation**

There are flaws in the consultation questionnaire drawn up by Shirley Advance, and in the extrapolation of results, which have greatly exacerbated local distrust. The referendum conducted by Keep Shirley Alive addressed the one point (the inclusion of the superstore) that Shirley Advance left out. The resulting contradiction of community opinion could have been avoided if Shirley Advance's questionnaire and extrapolation of results had been conducted better in the first place. See page 33.

### **Recommendations**

Our final recommendations can be found in section 5, page 35. We seek mainly to provide information for local stakeholders to draw conclusions, rather than to advocate a particular position on the Heart of Shirley proposals. We make some recommendations for further research on need, impact, origin and destination. We make others for a process to draw up new plans which are designed to meet local need and add vitality to Shirley, involving true community involvement. These could be useful if the proposals are rejected. If the proposals go ahead, we make some recommendations for any potential ill-effects to be minimised and positive effects maximised.

We also identify the need for further UK-wide research to be done by government, agency and third sector partners on the impacts of such development.

## SECTION 2: OUTLINE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF PROPOSALS

### **The Mixed Use scheme as a whole**

Bringing residential into the development is well in line with Regional Spatial Strategy Policy UR3 which advocates “*adopting strategies to encourage more people to live in or close to centres*”.

A mixed use development, and particularly a residential element, is well documented to be a positive way to bring people into a centre, and with less negative impact on traffic levels. Residential development also ensures that the area is “peopled” around the clock for greater security and quality of environment, particularly at night. An outline of some of the benefits and government policy on mixed use developments can be found in draft PPS6, 2.16-2.18.

The scheme also contains public squares, and the land remains in the ownership of the borough Council. If the lease is carefully arranged, these public squares can remain in the control of local people rather than a private company. The arrangement of public squares and fairly high density quality housing is also positive.

The replacement and enhancement of community facilities displaced by the development is positive (assuming this is being done in agreement with users).

### **Retail**

The proposal contains both the 42,000 sq ft superstore and approx 60,000 sq ft retail units. The objective is that this extra retail “claws back” local people back to shop in Shirley who were previously going to out-of-centre superstores and other shopping centres. Shirley Advance purport that this clawback would benefit existing traders along the high street as well as the new centre. More types of retail would strengthen the role of the centre for local shopping, and Shirley would have a defined centre instead of just a long string of shops along the road.

Alternatively, the new centre could supplant the role of the existing centre, becoming a one-stop destination for shoppers who would then not cross into the high street. The increased footfall might thus never leave the new centre. In a worst case scenario the new centre might also syphon off shoppers from the existing centre.

Large format supermarkets often contain various extra convenience functions beyond food retail and thus many types of ‘convenience’ retail - chemists, food shops, newsagents, dry cleaners etc, may be affected.

The positive or negative impacts on the existing centre will be more far-reaching than simply a displacement of the centre to the Heart of Shirley site: changes in local multiplier effect; knock-on effects on other businesses and on community facilities, local character, job numbers, traffic generation, the appeal or otherwise of Shirley High Street (including in its function as the new development’s “access road”).

The impacts of the retail elements of the proposal are potentially by far the greatest and therefore most of this report focuses on them.

## **RETAIL: IMPACT: GUIDANCE, EVIDENCE AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **TRAFFIC, ACCESSIBILITY AND SHOPPING DESTINATIONS**

It is difficult to see how this development would not generate congestion, contrary to PPS13, given the location on a congested stretch of the A34 and the car-based nature of a large superstore. If the development becomes a “destination” for comparison shopping then this may also be traffic generating depending on where journeys are originating and from where they will be displaced.

If congestion is an issue, customers may well decide to visit the superstore or comparison retail outlets outside normal trading hours when more parking would be available. Much shopping activity could therefore take place in the evenings and on Sundays when independent retailers would be closed. In order to enjoy 'spin-off' benefits, other traders would therefore need to change their opening hours to accommodate these changes. This may be difficult for smaller businesses.

There could be potential benefits to congestion and journey distances of the Heart of Shirley development. Firstly, Shirley residents on the West side of the A34 currently have to cross it to get to any of the town's superstores, which red-routing is making more difficult, or else they travel a longer distance to the Maypole. A superstore in the Heart of Shirley development could replace journeys to the Maypole and reduce the number of journeys by car across the A34. However there are of course then reduced footfall implications for the East side of the A34.

Dickens Heath residents may also be making journeys to Touchwood – hence crossing the A34. While their displacement to the Heart of Shirley development would shorten journeys and claw back trade to Shirley it would still require them to cross the A34 to enter the development's car park.

Assumptions are made that Shirley residents are currently driving to Touchwood for shopping they should be able to do in Shirley. If these shoppers are to be clawed back by the Heart of Shirley development this may add traffic to the A34 - or residential roads to the side

Origin and destination analysis is needed in order to know where people currently come from, to shop in Shirley, and where Shirley's residents go to shop. This should have formed part of the reasoning for the Heart of Shirley site selection. The movements of the Dickens Heath population would also be relevant information.

In terms of Council policy, siting of new development should be driven not simply by drawing in shoppers from other catchment areas but by a strategic objective to make journeys shorter. We would hope to see evidence that this objective is informing decisions on this development.

In terms of public and stakeholder opinion, traffic is one of the great contradictions of modern planning. Retailers and the public constantly want both more parking and less congestion. Beyond a few highway and car park design measures, this is impossible. In-centre locations for what is currently car-based development can gradually reduce car journeys by increasing congestion, but in the short term this can be a painful process for the local centre, and as superstore operators often encourage bulk-buying to make savings the car is often the only

viable mode of transport for most consumers. Stakeholders should be aware of this and choose whether they prefer the devil, the deep blue sea or more use of public transport.

There is also a lack of robust generic evidence as to the effects of new retail-based developments on traffic and congestion, and as an NRPF<sup>2</sup> study cited on page 23 points out, most existing research is carried out by those with a financial interest in the outcome.

## **LOCATION IN RESPECT TO EXISTING CENTRE**

The site allocated for the Heart of Shirley development is close to one end of the High Street, set back from the primary retail frontage and is an edge-of-centre site, straddling the centre boundary. The not-yet-approved draft Unitary Development Plan (UDP) seeks to redefine the site as in-centre, but for the purpose of ascertaining impacts, the site has clear lines of separation between itself and the existing centre and it is therefore advisable (as well as compliant with the current UDP) to consider it to be edge of centre.

The main objective of recent changes to retail policy (PPS6<sup>3</sup>) is to promote and enhance town centres rather than out-of-town developments, which are recognised to have damaged centres in the past. Current policy therefore supports the use of edge-of-centre sites such as this for town centre expansion.

Councils such as Solihull MBC need to ‘work with what they have’ in their retail planning: previous planning policy including out of town developments (and a general trend to consolidate away from small centres) has weakened the local centre. Solihull Council’s priority is to ensure the centre remains strong. Thus the justification of the “new Heart of Shirley” that these plans constitute. The inclusion of a superstore in these proposals is to divert trade from the out-of-town superstores back into Shirley, while the other retail units are intended to provide a greater degree of comparison retail to ensure Shirley centre meets its population’s evolving needs.

PPS6 facilitates major site assembly on the edge of town centres for such development. Those who object to the superstore in the Heart of Shirley proposals should perhaps be appreciative that this development is mixed use rather than the entire site being proposed for a hypermarket, which may often be a consequence of the new PPS6. However, little research has so far been conducted on whether such close-to- but edge-of centre locations *for superstores* have a positive or negative effect on the existing town centre retail that government policy (PPS6) assumes. There is little enough academic or practitioner research on the impact of the previous retail planning policy guidance; and the impacts of PPS6 are even less understood. Cases such as Shirley, if the scheme goes ahead and is well monitored, could provide evidence as to whether PPS6 guidance on edge-of-centre developments is in accordance with its own objective of strengthening town centres.

Also, PPS6 recommends (at 2.5) that “*where growth is more appropriately accommodated by more efficient use of land and buildings within the town centre, local planning authorities should first aim to increase the density of development through multi-storey, mixed use development*” and (at 2.16) “*The Government is concerned to ensure that efficient use is made of land within centres and elsewhere. Local planning authorities should formulate plan*

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<sup>2</sup> National Retail Planning Forum

<sup>3</sup> Draft Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres, 1.2

*policies which reflect the need to encourage higher-density, multi-storey development within and around existing centres”*

This would clearly be more in accordance with planning guidance than development in a separate site and with some building on open space. There is certainly potential for some new development along Shirley High St interspersed with existing uses, which could bring in complementary multiples and strengthen the existing centre at the same time. Part of the Heart of Shirley site, or other site along the High Street, could still provide public open space, retail, housing, offices and an underground car park.

It is very widely accepted that Shirley has an overprovision of large food retailers. Shirley’s catchment area is unlikely to be able to support another major retailer and therefore one of the retailers closer to the town centre may close down, which in itself would lose trade from within the centre. As a DETR report (henceforth “The *Impact* report”) says,

*“The ‘need’ for a new foodstore in market towns/district centres should be more clearly defined in PPG6. Where there is no need for a foodstore (i.e. no qualitative or quantitative deficiency), then no additional foodstores should be developed.”*

And,

*“Our research shows that market towns and district centres generally have small catchments, which will only support a limited number of large foodstores. Therefore the development of an out-of-centre or edge-of-centre foodstore represents a loss of potential investment in the town centre. New town centre foodstores can act as a catalyst for further investment in town centres. Where there is no capacity for additional retailing, the opening of an edge-of-centre or out-of-centre superstore is likely to lead to ‘disinvestment’ in the town centre (i.e. failure to reinvest in store refurbishments, etc). This has implications for the future viability of the individual retailer, and investment in the town centre as a whole<sup>4</sup> (30-31)*

The Shirley proposal’s superstore is on the edge of the current centre, and is also less central than some of the existing supermarkets.

The definition of an edge-of-centre development is as follows:

*For shopping purposes, a location within easy walking distance (i.e. 200-300 metres) of the primary shopping area, often providing parking facilities that serve the centre as well as the store, thus enabling one trip to serve several purposes. Local topography will affect pedestrians’ perceptions of easy walking distance. For example barriers, such as crossing major roads and car parks, the attractiveness and perceived safety of the route and the strength of attraction of the town centre, are all factors which must be considered<sup>5</sup>*

### **Linkages**

Shirley Advance agree that linkages are essential. The design of the development is well linked in a lot of respects in that it does not turn its back on existing retail. The new offices and housing provide a linked catchment in themselves for retail. Finer points of design also provide an encouraging interface between the Heart of Shirley site and the adjacent area of

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<sup>4</sup> The Impact of Large Foodstores on Market Towns and District Centres, DETR, [http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm\\_planning/documents/page/odpm\\_plan\\_606124.hcsp](http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_planning/documents/page/odpm_plan_606124.hcsp)

<sup>5</sup> from PPS6 Annex A table 2

the High Street: for example, new street trees on the immediately adjacent length of the High Street and indeed beyond; and the area of public space which effectively opens out the new development onto the High Street.

However, the road itself remains a barrier, the effects of which may be worsened by increased traffic, as well as possible decreased incentive to cross due to the easy availability of new shops in the new centre. The “enhanced pedestrian link” across the road would be welcome but further information is needed on this to know how effective it will be: given the road is an A-road radial route into Birmingham there are limits to the possibilities for enhancement without reducing traffic flows through the centre.

More importantly, the proposed pedestrian entrances from the underground car park would take people straight into the building containing the superstore<sup>6</sup>, which discourages shoppers from visiting the areas beyond the car park. This decreases the likelihood of spin-off trade for existing shops amongst those using the car park to visit the new development. However this would be partially offset by the positive effect of the new car park in providing more parking generally for those who do intend to visit the existing Shirley centre. This could be mitigated or exacerbated by what is done with the detailed layout of these entrances and with lengths of stay for car parking (see case studies p44, 46). If extra pedestrian entrances were put in at the Stratford Road edge of the car park, this would increase the likelihood of shoppers using the High Street shops; but if the new centre is to be properly integrated with the existing centre, a greater proportion of the high street needs to be on the thoroughfare between the development and the car park.

Another barrier, especially given the placing of the superstore, could be the self-sufficient nature of the whole development. The ‘linked trip’ in this case could easily be shoppers coming to the Heart of Shirley with the primary aim of going to the superstore (after all, this is considered the primary footfall ‘draw’ of the Heart of Shirley) and their linked trip is to cross to the other retail outlets *within* the Heart of Shirley. To then cross into the existing string of shops would require a third step of movement.

While the pleasant interface environment shown on Shirley Advance’s display panel will do something to encourage such a third step, this may not be sufficient. The shops closest to the new development may benefit but those further along or across the road are unlikely to benefit from shoppers going so far from their original journey.

Buses on the other hand run straight down the Stratford Road and as such will support the existing development in that the Stratford Road will be people’s point of entry to Shirley; likewise most travelling by bicycle and foot or from Shirley Station; so linkage for these modes of transport is stronger.

Those who come to the Heart of Shirley development for the other retail outlets, and not for the superstore, are more likely to make the one-step of their linked trip into the existing centre where they will find complementary shops.

It is therefore important to find out what proportion of the footfall in the new centre would have which primary purpose.

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<sup>6</sup> Can be seen by looking at basement and ground floor display panels: <http://www.shirleyadvance.com/decpanels/BasementDecExhib.pdf> and <http://www.shirleyadvance.com/decpanels/GndDecExhib.pdf>

Meanwhile Shirley Advance's Q&A section on their website says that the new retail units will be "designed to complement existing shops"<sup>7</sup>. This is a worthy aim in line with planning guidance, but it is unclear how such complementarity will be deduced.

A 1996 survey by Somerfield on linked spends of 2,000 people doing their main shop at a Somerfield's at 33 sites found that for every pound spent in one of its town centre stores an average of 46 pence was spent at other nearby shop. For edge of centre stores the linked spend fell to 21 pence and to 10 pence for out of town stores.<sup>8</sup>

This shows that whether the new foodstore is beneficial to Shirley is therefore largely dependent on whether trade comes mainly from existing out of centre stores or existing in-centre stores. The superstore element could well divert shoppers from existing high street retail rather than bringing people in from out of town stores. Traffic implications are likely to influence this, for example if the out of town stores are more accessible by car and the in centre ones more accessible by foot and public transport, so if most shoppers will be travelling by car they will be more likely to gravitate outwards from in-centre stores than inwards from out-of-centre stores.

The second objective of draft PPS6 is to enhance consumer choice (1.3). While planning policy does not restrict competition or preserve existing commercial interests, there is clearly a requirement to preserve diversity and choice and advocacy of the development and strengthening of the existing centre.

*In a speech given by the then Planning Minister Richard Caborn on 11th February 1999 (the Caborn Statement), the issue of whether the need for a retail development should be considered and whether the sequential test should be adopted was clarified. He advised that these issues applied to proposals to develop at edge of centre or out of centre locations... The Minister also added that in allocating sites within development plans as district and town centres, local planning authorities should have considered retail impacts and through this there is no requirement for developers to consider the retail impact of a proposed store within such locations.*

We do not think that the Shirley Study or Hillier Parker report constitute 'consideration of retail impacts at the site allocation stage'. See also p21-23 in Section 3

## **SIZE**

Problems with the "size" of the Heart of Shirley development seem to be more about its component parts than about the total retail floorspace itself.

The *Impact* report suggests that edge-of-centre food stores needs to be of an appropriate scale for the existing town centre, and to be complementary. "*Where foodstore proposals are disproportionately large compared to the size of the centre, the new store can supplant the role of the centre*"<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.shirleyadvance.com/qa.html>

<sup>8</sup> Commercial survey quoted in 'A report on the supply of groceries from multiple stores in the United Kingdom' Competition Commission, 2000

<sup>9</sup> Impact of large supermarkets on market towns and district centres

DRAFT PPS6 also requires developments to be of an appropriate scale. (2.33) – “The aim should be to put the appropriate type and scale of development in the right type of centre, to ensure that it fits into that centre”

Even existing PPG6 states that ‘developers and retailers will need to be flexible about the design and scale of the development...to fit local circumstances.’

The larger part of the centre’s retail comprises the 42,000 sq ft superstore. This is considered by many local people and, from the course of my research, retail and planning specialists to be an inappropriate size for Shirley centre, which would be against the above planning guidance. Due to the nature of commercial and public sector work, none of these specialists were prepared to be quoted on this.

Shirley Advance and the Council say that a superstore is needed as an ‘anchor’ to draw enough people in to the development; (however our analysis above highlights that those drawn in for a superstore may not take their spin-off spend as far as Shirley High Street.) They then make the case that the superstore needs to be of this size, because retailers will not be interested in a smaller development. However -

*The majority of food retailers have introduced new smaller store formats. However, this is not necessarily due to the sequential approach, but rather a commercial decision. The new formats vary from smaller high street stores to slightly smaller superstores carrying fewer lines. Only one food retailer is introducing a larger format<sup>10</sup>.*

Furthermore a report published by the *International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research* shows that retailers are becoming much more interested in smaller sites due to the stricter planning regimes of the last few years and to apparent market saturation<sup>11</sup>. Indeed many retailers have supported the changes to PPS6 that encourage smaller in-centre stores.

This has also been reflected in the conversations we have had with the Retail Enterprise Network and retail planners.

It is interesting that the case made by Shirley Advance and the Council has never been that this size of supermarket IS appropriate for Shirley; just that retailers will not be interested in a smaller store. Thus, the Heart of Shirley plans are supposed to right the weakness of Shirley Centre with the wrong of an oversized supermarket.

Negotiations with the retailers are no doubt subject to commercial confidentiality, but local people should have a right to know to what extent Shirley Advance have attempted to promote a smaller supermarket size within the development.

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<sup>10</sup> The Sequential Approach to Retail Development, J. Baldock, for the NRPF  
<http://www.nrpf.org/development.pdf>,

<sup>11</sup> Power, policy networks and planning: the involvement of major grocery retailers in the formulation of Planning Policy Guidance Note 6 since 1988, Pal et al, *International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research* , July 2001

The other 60,000 sq ft extra retail space with its “complementary retail” in itself could provide the boost to Shirley centre that is needed for its consumers and its general vitality and viability. However, with the large superstore on the same site and more strongly linked, the two retail roles, as has already been analysed above, could potentially create a self-sufficient development that “supplants the role of the existing centre” rather than “fitting into it”.

## SHOP SWAP?

Given the over-provision of supermarkets in and near Shirley, it may well be that a retail operator with a nearby store, perhaps one compromised by space, may be interested in moving in to the development and closing their existing store. Shirley Advance confirmed<sup>12</sup> that discussions have taken place with “compromised stores” in the vicinity. If this scenario happens, then the impact depends on the current location of the store to be replaced. If it is out of centre, then the desired effect of “clawback” from out of town is made significantly more likely. The potential spin-off benefits still then depend on whether the spin-off proceeds beyond the Heart of Shirley shops onto the High Street. If the store to be replaced is currently in-centre then as above this is likely to have a negative impact on high street trade. Either way, as all the current stores are on the East side of the High Street there could be traffic benefits from replacing any of them with a store on the west side, ie in the Heart of Shirley development. Of the stores within or very near Shirley, the most appropriate one to move into the Heart of Shirley development would be the Tesco store on the Stratford Road near the Hall Green boundary.

The size of the foodstore would also be an issue here. In order not to impact negatively on the existing centre the store would ideally be smaller than the proposed 42,000 sq ft and not bigger than the size of the store to be replaced.

## LOCAL ECONOMICS

Localise West Midlands promotes a re-diversification of economic activity and a redressing of the balance between localised and globalised trade and money flow. This section outlines the arguments for and benefits of this approach in relation to Shirley, as it is a relevant consideration in terms of the wider impacts of development on the local community and its wellbeing and prosperity.

The phrase “redressing the balance” here is important: we are not advocating an adversarial or prescriptive approach to multiple retail, but simply that decision makers ensure that local diversity is understood, valued and can thrive.

*Suppose you paint a pound coin red and watch where it goes. Every time it changes hands within a community, it means income for a local person. Therefore the more times it circulates, the better for that community. The problem is that money going in flows straight out again because there is nothing to keep it in the area. In Britain today, money flows much too quickly out of local economies, just like a leaky bucket. There are two ways to keep the bucket full: you can pour the money in faster, or you can keep it in longer by plugging the leaks<sup>13</sup>.*

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<sup>12</sup> meeting with Robert Birch and Mike Swallow, 21<sup>st</sup> december 2004

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.renewal.net/Documents/RNET/Research/Pluggingleakbriefing.pdf>

Local independent businesses are much more likely to use other local businesses for their supplies and services - window cleaners, wholesalers, decorators and so on.

In particular, independent retailers use wholesale suppliers. As the number of independent shops is dwindling, some wholesale suppliers are also going out of business – a 10% drop in wholesale suppliers over the last five years, and six lost per week in the last two years. This is part of what is called their local multiplier effect on the local economy, for which local authorities have some degree of responsibility.

### **Outline of Local Multiplier Effect in Shirley**

Localise West Midlands, with help from local volunteers, conducted a survey of the existing High Street Shops with the aim of discovering the extent of local ownership and local suppliers used. The main purpose was to give some idea of the current local multiplier of Shirley without conducting a full LM3 analysis. Results showed that only 8% of large chains used local suppliers while 55% of small chains and 23% of independent shops did. 40% of all the shops in Shirley were independent.

Percentage of turnover spent within the local economy by the average supermarket retailer is 10.2% and in the average chain store of any type, 11%<sup>14</sup>.

### **Predatory pricing**

One strength multiples have over independent shops is pricing power:

*The Competition Commission's report on Supermarkets in 2000 concluded that below cost selling was damaging to smaller competitors because ...of the huge imbalance in buying power between the largest supermarkets and all smaller retailers: "the problems caused by below-cost selling are compounded because these smaller stores secure far less favourable supplier terms than the large multiples". Data produced by the Competition Commission shows that on the top five branded lines sold, independent and smaller retailers paid 103% relative to the average main party price [19]. The Competition Commission suggested that where prices for basic items of shopping (KVI's) were sold below cost in major supermarkets there would be a disproportionate effect on convenience stores which relied heavily on sales of such products. The Competition Commission recognised that by undermining the competitiveness of neighbourhood outlets this practice reduced accessibility and choice to consumers.*<sup>15</sup>

[19] Competition Commission (2000). *Supermarkets, A report on the supply of groceries from multiple stores in the United Kingdom, Volume 2*, pages 249-250

Asda-Walmart are particularly well known for predatory pricing to wipe out competition in the local area, although other retailers also do this. We do not yet know the identity of the preferred retailer, but if Asda is the preferred retailer, this may well have a worse effect on the local economy due to this and the range of goods and services Asda provides.

Most superstore operators have a very low local usage of local suppliers. The Cooperative Group has by far the highest rate of local supplier usage amongst the major retailers<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> The Money Trail, NEF, <http://www.neweconomics.org/gen/uploads/The%20Money%20Trail.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/evidence/proposal\\_for\\_a\\_market\\_stud.pdf](http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/evidence/proposal_for_a_market_stud.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> *Stakeholder accountability in the UK supermarket sector*, Final report of the Race to the Top project, Tom Fox & Bill Vorley, Nov 2004

Multiples also employ fewer people per retail sales than independents do: From 1990-2000 retail sales increased by 13%, retail jobs by 3%<sup>17</sup>.

### **Clone Town Britain**

Larger scale multiples, however sincerely they practise their CSR agenda, have the economic effect of creating over-dependence within supply chains, concentrating economic power in fewer hands, distancing itself from local concerns, becoming inflexible to local needs, creating fewer jobs than independents, and syphoning control and money flow from the local community. Local character can also be decimated if every town has the same “faces” on its high street. While the majority are still happy to have the reliability of chains they recognise, there is a growing discontent with “clone towns” that goes far wider than the organisations working on this issue.

Shirley resident Carl Smith recently conducted the New Economics Foundation’s Clone Town Britain survey in Shirley<sup>18</sup>. Of a count of 50 shops, the survey identified 31 independent shops within Shirley and 19 chain stores, and a “Clone Town” rating of 34.4 (62% of the shops were local). According to NEF’s analysis, this puts Shirley at the “home town” end of the “borderline” category. We would think this is sufficiently healthy for an urban centre; higher scores tend to be found in rural market towns, some Asian-populated district centres and tourist destination centres. With 15-20 retail units in the Heart of Shirley development being marketed at multiples<sup>19</sup>, this could tip the balance much more in the direction of a “clone town”. No doubt this will please some shoppers, but the full economic effects should be taken into account: both benefits and disbenefits. And there *are* benefits: the status quo is heavily dependent on chain retail and there may be a need for local authorities such as Solihull to cater for this need while still enhancing the appeal and securing the existence of the independents.

### **Positive balance**

A positive balance of elements for retail diversity and centre health includes *Small, medium-sized and large businesses, businesses with supply chain links to outside markets, and attractors into the area. Sources of inward investment should be linked in to the local economy*<sup>20</sup>. A further outline of such elements is at page 26.

These elements should form the basis of the sort of proactive retail planning further discussed at p24 and in Section 5: Recommendations.

If multiples are not wanted at all, as in Lewes (see case studies p48), then retail unit sizes need to be kept small, as they are currently in Shirley for non-food retail. But this approach is better suited to tourist areas and market towns rather than urban centres such as Shirley, where it is clearly beneficial to have a good mix of chain and independent retail to ensure that current trends are allowed for. This applies particularly to ‘comparison’ and slightly less to ‘convenience’ goods.

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<sup>17</sup> Thorpe D (1999) *Superstores and employment in retailing* John Lewis Partnership, a report for the National Retail Planning Forum.

<sup>18</sup> For details of how the survey is conducted, see NEF’s *Clone Town Britain* report, p22 <http://www.neweconomics.org/gen/uploads/mrrefr55lroqjwrefpvg525528082004130712.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> See [www.shirleyadvance.com/](http://www.shirleyadvance.com/)

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.pluggingtheleaks.org/ptlab.html>

This approach is not limited to NGO policy recommendations. In Policy UR3, the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy obliges local authorities to:

- *“develop strategies to promote a sense of identity and local distinctiveness”*
- *ensuring the highest standards of design are adopted, building on the existing character and identity of centres”*

#### **Effects on other facilities:**

The long, strung-out nature of Shirley, up and down a busy road, is stated to be one of the reasons for its lack of success. However, a centre is not just a long line of shops and effects are not simply down to whether shops outside the new centre will remain viable. There are various community facilities – places of worship, schools, community centres etc along Shirley High Street which will be more isolated from day to day business if the centre is moved into a separate piece of land.

Conversely, the proposals include enhanced linkages with Shirley Park from two places on the high street, which does improve access to a community facility.

The taking of 2 ½ acres of green space (1 acre being designated parkland) seems unnecessary and is against planning policy. It is also an element of the proposal strongly opposed by local people<sup>21</sup>.

#### **CASE STUDIES AND EXISTING RESEARCH:**

Case studies and their conclusions can be found in Appendix 1, p39. It has been difficult to find case studies that can reflect much on the potential effects in Shirley, as there is much variety in types of centre, other centres in the vicinity, health of the centre etc, but the combined information has produced some conclusions.

The *Impact* report found that *“Many local authorities consider large foodstores have had an adverse impact on the vitality and viability of market towns and district centres.”* However, this statement includes out of town superstores and is therefore inconclusive in this instance.

It remains difficult to assess impacts of a development until post-opening. In any case, where a supermarket does have a negative effect on a local centre, there is often a time lag of several years between a superstore opening and local shops closing.

Conversely, many people have noticed that the nature of consumer drift into a new centre and particularly a new superstore is often temporary. Firstly there is the initial curiosity about the range of the new superstore, following which shoppers often go back to their previous regular store. Secondly, if a development is planned not just to serve the immediate catchment area but to “poach” consumers from other stores and centres, this is usually over the next few years “poached” back when the next expansion develops. This inevitably leads to larger and larger expansions of the superstores in each area in continual competition, and in this cycle is detrimental to the actual needs of each catchment area as well as increasing traffic.

Furthermore almost 45% of local authorities consider retail and transport impact methodologies are inadequate, and are concerned about the objectivity of assessments, the

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<sup>21</sup> Consultation report <http://www.shirleyadvance.com/fullreport.pdf>

lack of reliable base data and the ease with which variables can be manipulated. Meanwhile only a minority of local authorities (14%) have attempted post-opening surveys. However, these are generally undertaken on an ad hoc basis and are not based on a consistent methodology.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Quoted in "Impact of Large Superstores on market Towns and District centres, DETR"

## **CONCLUSIONS ON IMPACT**

### **Mixed use and residential**

The mixed use nature of the proposal, many design elements, public squares and inclusion of housing, are likely to have positive impacts on the character, attractiveness, vitality and footfall of the whole of Shirley.

### **Origin and destination:**

- A development on the West side of the A34 may well have benefits to traffic movement and centre balance
- Development may serve shoppers from Dickens Heath and other areas beyond Shirley's immediate catchment area, which does not correspond with its stated function but may (or may not) be of benefit
- Need much more information to assess movement implications: origin and destination analysis
- There will be an increase in freight in the town centre

### **Edge of and in- centre location**

- Not enough research exists nationally on impacts of edge- or in- centre large foodstores. The Government assumes certain benefits.
- Case studies show mixed results dependent on:
  - size of superstore
  - catchment area of centre
  - whether linkages are well planned and managed
  - whether pedestrian flows pass local shops between car park and foodstore
  - existence of other well-established non-central stores
  - whether superstore operator keeps to planning conditions

### **Impacts due to retail type, location and catchment**

- The 'self-sufficiency' and dual retail roles of the proposed Heart of Shirley and their positioning within the space may mean that even "linked trips" stay within the new Heart: clawback may not benefit the existing centre, especially from those whose primary destination is the superstore.
- More benefit to the existing centre is likely to come from those whose primary destination is the other retail units.
- Benefits would be greater if some of these retail units were distributed along the existing High Street.
- The two retail roles and size of proposed superstore together make the development of an inappropriate size for Shirley centre
- Superstore likely to negatively affect convenience retail, especially food retailers, even if existing centre footfall increases.
- Impacts will depend on the "complementarity" of new retail.
- Retailers at both the cheap and the specialist ends of the spectrum will be less affected than those in the "middle ground"
- Superstore may spin trade away from supermarkets close to the centre, or claw it back from trade further away, with corresponding negative/positive impacts on centre footfall.
- A smaller foodstore would have a more positive impact.
- If the superstore is a replacement for an existing store further away from the centre, overall impacts may be more positive although there is still the issue of whether clawed back trade leaves the new centre.

- Positive impacts on Shirley’s health may be temporary if “native” trade clawed back from outside retail sites or trade brought in from outside Shirley’s catchment area is then lost to new development elsewhere.
- Retail impact assessment done in similar circumstances is generally thought to be unreliable and sometimes lacking in objectivity.

**Recommendation:** Analysis of retail expenditure predictions needs careful examination in light of these conclusions: the Partnership should ensure it is involved in setting scope of retail impact analysis. Analysis needed of what percentage of trade in the new centre would come for which purpose, and from which existing superstores it would be diverted. The Partnership should find out how “complementary” retailers will be identified.

- Linkage by bus currently favours High Street retail
- Positioning of pedestrian exits from car park are detrimental to the existing centre

**Recommendation:** Pedestrian exits from the car park should repositioned near High Street.

High Street may ‘move along’ towards the development –ie the “ribbon” gets shorter. Negative implications for those at the south end of the High Street, positive for those near the new centre. Potential negative implications for civil amenities towards south which are not easily moved.

**Recommendation:** Dealing with this could be “managed” by the Town Centre Partnership, hopefully aided by the developer, to ensure that negative impacts are lessened

### **Local Economic and Community Considerations**

- The proposal will increase the multiples’ market share in Shirley at the risk of a loss of some independents and to the benefit of others.
- Independent retailers have a greater knock-on contribution to the local economy than multiples.
- Multiples, especially foodstores, often use predatory pricing to eliminate competition.
- If the town centre moves away from civic facilities this could have a negative effect on community wellbeing.
- No justification seems available for the taking of the small area of designated open space of the additional area of non-designated green space.
- The developers that comprise Shirley Advance and its architect are locally based, which is positive.

### **Overall effect on Shirley**

Our first conclusion is that much more information is needed and some of it could have been provided at an earlier stage. However, from the information we have:

Assuming the Partnership wish to maintain and enhance a) a vibrant and community-based town centre rather than a shopping mall, b) a healthy mixture of independents and multiples in both convenience and comparison retail c) increased footfall for vitality and viability, then our conclusion is that despite some potential positive effects the Heart of Shirley proposals will have a negative overall effect on these aspects.

If the superstore in question replaces an existing store further out of the centre of Shirley, and is considerably smaller than the proposed 42,000 sq ft, then impacts are likely to be more positive.

If town centre vitality and viability is simply measured in terms of expenditure and footfall, regardless of money flows and impacts on existing areas, individuals and retailers, then the Heart of Shirley proposals will have a positive overall impact on the centre regardless of the operator chosen or complementarity of new retail.

However we would recommend that you assess each element of this report and draw your own conclusions. See also recommendations on page 35.

## SECTION 3: NEED FOR THE DEVELOPMENT, PROACTIVE RETAIL PLANNING AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

### Health of Shirley

There is some debate about to what extent Shirley is a 'failing' centre.

The 1996 Hillier-Parker report, a 'Retail Health Audit' commissioned by the Council, contained sections on the vitality & viability of Shirley, retailer perceptions, comparison with other centres and future opportunities & threats. Its conclusions were:

- Shirley has underlying weaknesses which make it vulnerable to competition (weaknesses including the linear nature of the centre, the fact that the Stratford Road has a severing effect to pedestrians and the fact that it is surrounded by strong trading centres such as Solihull & Birmingham)
- The Council should introduce a plan to improve factors such as cleanliness, landscaping, signage, street furniture, CCTV & lighting (which was successfully done, I'm told)
- The centre has limited capacity to expand due to the presence of other dominant centres although the fact that there is no defined retail core (such as the New Heart as currently proposed) makes it vulnerable to further edge of centre or out of centre developments
- That there should be further studies of consumers and retailers carried out to assess attitudes to the town and perceptions of the town.<sup>23</sup>

It is worth noting that a) the report was produced just after the opening of an out-of-centre retail park, when vacancy rates were higher and footfall lower. and b) since then, eight years have passed and c) no report on the vitality and viability of Shirley as a centre has since been done, nor any analysis of what might provide the best solutions to any problems identified.

While the linear nature of Shirley may well be less desirable than a more compact town centre, linear centres along radial routes are a traditional pattern. The drawbacks can be minimised by targeting development on small sites along the length of the high street. These proposals do not seem to work with the present shape of the town, but more create an alternative centre off to the side. This would seem to have the potential to supplant, rather than strengthen, the existing centre.

The Hillier Parker report states:

*The absence of a quality foodstore well linked with the town centre would significantly reduce the appeal of Shirley as a convenience shopping destination and thus it would no longer properly fulfil its current role. Other retail uses in the town benefit from the trade drawn by the foodstores and could not create the same draw without the foodstore presence.*

This cannot directly be interpreted to mean "Shirley needs another foodstore". It means "We need to ensure that we *keep* at least one quality food store in Shirley to ensure Shirley maintains its *current* benefits from this".

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<sup>23</sup> Information provided by Chris Gregory, Shirley Town Centre Management, Solihull MBC

Since the Hillier Parker report was published there have been significant changes in both the retail provision in Shirley (which has increased) and retail policy and good practice.

The transformation of Shirley's Gateway foodstore to a Somerfield and then to a Marks and Spencers foodstore is indicative of a trend in Shirley towards quality food retail which seems to be well catered for.

Solihull's draft Unitary Development Plan (UDP) also refers to the Shirley Study's<sup>24</sup> identification of the current Heart of Shirley site as ideal for the proposed superstore, but this study is now 7 years old during which time there have been changes to the viability of the centre and to planning guidance, making out of town developments easier for a local authority to turn down.

Indicators for centre health listed in PPS6 are as follows: diversity of uses, retailer representations, shopping rents, proportion of vacant property, commercial yields, pedestrian flows, accessibility, customer views and behaviour, perception of safety and occurrence of crime, environmental quality.

It seems that not all of these are measured by the Council or Partnership but that floorspace, vacancies, the presence of multiple retailers, pedestrian flows, rents and perhaps retail turnover are the most commonly measured.

According to Management Horizons Shopping Centre index 2003-4 shows that Shirley improved its ranking by 211 places between 1995 and 2003. (481<sup>st</sup> in 1995 to 270<sup>th</sup> in 2003.)

From Shirley Town Centre Key Performance Indicators July, August & September 2004, published by Shirley Town Centre Partnership:  
*Between July & October 2004, the average pedestrian flow was 183 pedestrians per hour, which compares favourably with 173 during the same period in 2003*  
*Compared to the similar period in 2003, average sales in Shirley between July & October 2004 increased by 3.3%. The current number of vacant units is 8, which reduced from 11 in the previous quarter. 11 vacant properties represents 3.4% of the total units in Shirley and this compares favourably to the national average of 10.5%.*

We understand this constitutes a significant improvement since the time of the Hillier-Parker report and Shirley Study.

When we asked Shirley Advance about these figures, Robert Birch replied that the increased footfall was "due to people hurrying between a few different shops, back and forth across the road<sup>25</sup>". We asked for further information on this but none was forthcoming.

According to Shirley Advance<sup>26</sup>, the number of banks, building societies and charity shops in Shirley are a sign that it is failing. However, these banks and building societies have been in place for many years, and during that time, especially more recently, Shirley's ranking as above has gone up, while its vacancy rates have gone down; there may also have been

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<sup>24</sup> Overall study of Shirley undertaken by a working group of councillors and officers, 1997

<sup>25</sup> Meeting with Robert Birch and Mike Swallow, 21<sup>st</sup> December 2004

<sup>26</sup> Meeting with Robert Birch and Mike Swallow, 21<sup>st</sup> December 2004

recent reductions in the number of banks/building societies within the centre. In any case, changes in banking practice would render this an inaccurate indicator.

It would surely take some years to displace banks, building societies and charity shops from the High Street, and some time also for increased success in a centre to be translated into rent increases, so given the positive indicators it seems a little premature to state that Shirley is “failing”. It may well be, and new development of some sort would undoubtedly be of benefit to Shirley but it certainly requires more investigation as to what exact problems there are and what will improve its health. At present it seems rather glib statements are made on Shirley’s health to corroborate an apparent fait accompli.

*As a health check report for the NRPF<sup>27</sup> points out, “Resources available to local authorities for town centre monitoring are typically insignificant when compared to the volume of data and analysis available to town centre investors. (We did not interview retailers but it is likely that they enjoy similar advantages). The result is very unequal access to information for the different stakeholders in town centres, who are frequently opposing parties at public enquiry. Some of the most innovative approaches to the health check are being developed in town centre partnerships where Town Centre Managers, retailers, property owners and local authorities all contribute to the process.*

*Also: The difficulty of providing meaningful numerical measures of vitality that can be standardised between places suggests that the evaluation of the ‘soul’ of town should remain at the local level.*

From the above contradictions and from conversations with Chris Gregory (Town Centre Manager for Shirley) it seems that determining the health of a local centre seems often more of an art than a science. In any case, principles of community involvement and the concept of proactive planning for centres need also to be applied.

The New Economics Foundation’s local multiplier effect tools LM3 and Plugging The Leaks give another indicator of centre health which it would benefit local authorities to use, as this (unlike any other listed indicator) gives some idea of to what extent money remains within and continues to benefit the local community instead of being syphoned off. In brief, LM3 calculates money passing from one business to the other within an area and thus the extent to which the benefit of the original money spent is “multiplied” within the local community. For more information see page 13

Shirley seems to be a “secondary shopping” area, defined as an area “substantially occupied by small independent businesses, where pedestrian levels are low and rental values are modest” and having “a different role and function (from prime areas) in the total environment of retailing<sup>28</sup>.” By this definition Shirley would actually seem to be quite normal for a secondary shopping area, and perhaps vacancy rates and perceptions as to how it is fulfilling local needs are more appropriate indicators than rental values and presence of multiples.

In conclusion, information on the retail need in Shirley and health check information is incomplete, out of date and inconclusive.

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<sup>27</sup> <http://www.nrpf.org/healthcheck.pdf> Town Centre Vitality & Viability: A Review of the Health Check Methodology - A report for the National Retail Planning Forum, February 2000

<sup>28</sup> The Role and Vitality of Secondary Shopping – a New Direction’, for the NRPF, Nov 04

## **Need for the development**

Solihull's draft UDP makes it clear that the purpose of new development in Shirley would be to "provide essential retail and other facilities for its immediate catchment area"<sup>29</sup>. If assessment on the proposed development shows that it would attract a larger customer base from outside catchment area then it would seem to be inappropriate for the location.

The UDP also states the following in relation to the needs of small businesses  
*"the council will encourage the retention and creation of opportunities for local employment in small business developments.... Where...the development supports sustainable development principles particularly by reducing the distances that goods need to be moved"*<sup>30</sup>.

Businesses using local suppliers and services are more likely to deliver these results than businesses using distant suppliers and services (see page 14)

*The UDP also states (8.2.4) "Modern units tend to require a greater depth than Shirley Centre is generally able to offer"*

This is a valid and satisfactory reason for including larger units in any new development that takes place. Care should also be taken that smaller units remain available for independent retailers.

## **Superstore need**

Several retail specialists whom we have consulted during our research said that Shirley has too many supermarkets and that another seems unnecessary. There seems to be a general consensus on this.

At my meeting with Shirley Advance and the Council, my questions about the superstore inclusion and size were not met with any rejection of the conclusion that Shirley does not need another superstore but only by the defence that a superstore and indeed one of this size was the only possible "anchor" for the Heart of Shirley development. It seems therefore to be the opinion of the Council, local people, and specialists from elsewhere that it is the other retail units that are the most wanted elements of the scheme in terms of what Shirley needs. The superstore is justified on the basis that it claws back shoppers to Shirley centre – thoroughly discussed in Section 1.

However, it is commonly reflected in retail analysis that retailers are becoming much more interested in stores of smaller sizes. See also page 11 on the size of the proposed superstore.

## **Proactive Retail Planning**

Proposed PPS6 on Retail reads:

*2.14 Local planning authorities should work in conjunction with business and other interested parties to:*

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<sup>29</sup> 8.3.1, Solihull Unitary Development Plan, First Review 1998 - 2011

<sup>30</sup> Policy E10

- *assess the need for new floorspace for retail, leisure and other key town centre uses, taking account of both quantitative and qualitative factors;*
- *identify deficiencies or gaps in provision, assess the capacity of existing centres to accommodate new development, including the scope for extending the town centre, and identify centres which may need consolidation or managed decline;*
- *...develop strategies for developing and strengthening centres within their area;*
- *identify and allocate sites in accordance with the considerations set out below (paragraphs 2.22 - 2.43);*
- *review all existing allocations as part of this exercise;*
- *develop local strategies for ensuring equality of access to local facilities; and set out criteria, in accordance with the key policies below, for assessing and locating other new development proposals for sites not allocated in the plan.*

*3.8 Need must be assessed for any retail or leisure application which would be in an edge-of-centre or out-of-centre location and which is not in accordance with an up-to-date development plan.*

*2.40 In selecting sites for allocation in local plans, local planning authorities should at all times have regard to the objective of promoting vital and viable town centres. They should make an explicit assessment of the likely impact of the proposed development on such centres. Making additional sites available for development may have both positive and negative impacts on existing centres. Positive benefits are likely to be strongest where additional development takes place in the town centre or by an expansion of the town centre, or where a development outside the town centre would be well connected to the centre and result in a significant number of linked trips and clawback expenditure.*

“The objective of promoting vital and viable town centres” is made paramount here in site selection.

*2.23 “In selecting sites for development, local planning authorities should*

- a) assess the need for development*
- b) secure the appropriate scale of the development*
- d) assess the impact of development on existing centres*

*2.26 Need assessments should be carried out as part of the plan preparation and review process, and updated regularly.<sup>31</sup>*

It is clear from this that need and impact assessment should be done at the site selection stage, rather than at planning application stage. In this case neither retail need nor impact on the existing centre has been justified at site selection stage. Then -

*The new emphasis on town centre strategies in draft PPS6 will require local authorities to “draw up a shared vision, a strategy and action plan for the centre<sup>32</sup>”.*

A local authority should surely implement such thorough analysis and planning before going ahead with a development of this scale.

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<sup>31</sup>Draft PPS6

[http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm\\_planning/documents/page/odpm\\_plan\\_026232-03.hcsp#TopOfPage](http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_planning/documents/page/odpm_plan_026232-03.hcsp#TopOfPage)

<sup>32</sup> Annex B, DRAFT PPS6: Implementation and community involvement

It is also clear that government policy and common sense would advocate a much more proactive approach to planning for retail for a whole centre than the sketchy and rather secretive process which seems to have given rise to this proposal.

Much more on the community involvement aspects of proactive retail planning is found in Section 4. Community participation models such as Planning for Real would provide the necessary approach. Meanwhile, a report for the National Retail Planning Forum advocates the role of Town Centre Partnerships in coordinating regeneration efforts and proactive planning<sup>33</sup>.

The New Economics Foundation recommends the following elements for a healthy town centre:

- *Small, medium sized and large businesses: some supplying local needs to provide a stable market that is less vulnerable to outside crashes, downturns in tourism and so on. Businesses which have links through the supply chain to other markets or to businesses outside the area;*
- *Social enterprises, who are (amongst other things) creating a range of products and services not met by the commercial market;*
- *Excellent inter-business networking;*
- *Strong partnership building and alliances between public, private, local community and voluntary sectors;*
- *Attractors into the area (this might mean larger businesses that pull in smaller ones, or tourist attractions, or key shops that pull in other shoppers);*
- *Skill/personnel mix: The right mixture between entrepreneurs, who are typically strongest at the start up phase of a project, and manager/leaders who are typically better at seeing projects through and finishing them;*
- *A variety of sources of inward investment in the area that are linked to local business so that they are embedded in the local economy<sup>34</sup>.*

### **Options analysis**

Options analysis is also considered good practice for consultation and decision making on new development. We have not seen or heard of any for this development.

Options that could be considered would be:

- no new development in Shirley
- no superstore within the Heart of Shirley proposal
- no other retail units in the Heart of Shirley proposal
- a community involvement exercise to draw up a proactive local retail plan before further progress on the Heart of Shirley proposals.

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<sup>33</sup> 'The Role and Vitality of Secondary Shopping – a New Direction', for the NRPf, Nov 04

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.pluggingtheleaks.org/ptlab.html>

## **CONCLUSIONS ON NEED FOR DEVELOPMENT**

The development has not been shaped around any assessment of need: all studies of need are out of date. The state of health of Shirley centre has not been fully identified.

Problems with the centre's linear nature would not seem to be solved by replacing the centre's retail role with a new retail site while community facilities remain in their linear positions.

If more analysis had been conducted before the proposals had been accepted this would have greatly reassured local people that the driving force behind the development is the wellbeing of Shirley rather than the capital receipts from the leasing of the land. It would also have provided, of course, a firmer factual basis on which to draw up proposals for an appropriate development.

If nothing else, it is important that the Council clarifies the exact need for having a supermarket above the appropriate size in this Heart of Shirley proposal. If this is simply an issue of needing the capital receipts, this should be a fact related to the local population rather than the issue being evaded.

Pressing forward with the proposals before the new UDP process has been finished is an example of the prematurity driving this approach to development.

A better approach would have been to draw up a town centre strategy, including involvement of the public in the process of identifying the components needed in their new centre. This approach enables dialogue about why certain elements MAY be essential to the development for financial reasons, rather than presenting the public with a fait accompli, where their choice is effectively "all or nothing". The process as it has happened is very much against the spirit of PPS12 and draft PPS6.

See also Section 4 on Consultation, and Recommendations in Section 5

## SECTION 4: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND CONSULTATION

There are two main problematic areas with regard to community involvement in the Shirley proposals: the consultation carried out by Shirley Advance; and government guidance on community involvement.

### Relevant Guidance

“**Community Involvement in Planning: The Government’s Objectives**” at 3.18 recommends that developers undergo pre-application discussion with local people for the specific purpose of reducing conflicts at the public inquiry stage<sup>35</sup>.

Options analysis on proposed PPS6 reads as follows:

*Option 2 (ie the proposed PPS6) will impose an additional cost on local authorities, as they will need to plan positively for growth of town centres, although much of this was already required. This will involve more negotiation with private sector interests and other stakeholders, compulsory purchase and, **in the case of authorities that have not developed a vision and strategy, greater community involvement than with the status quo (Option 1).***

PPS6 at 2.1 requires local authorities to “*consult with the community, including the public and private sectors, to ensure that their needs are reflected and that proposed allocations are realistic and viable*”.

PPS at 2.48 requires “*assessing where deficiencies exist in the provision of local convenience shopping and other facilities which serve people’s day-to-day needs; involving the local community and retailers in drawing up local strategies to ensure that planned new facilities will genuinely meet local needs*”.

Planning Policy Guidance note 17 (para 10) states that where open space is proposed to be built on, “Developers will need to consult the local community and demonstrate that their proposals are widely supported by them.”

The Regional Spatial Strategy in Policy UR1 recommends *establishing local urban renaissance visions through effective participation of residents, businesses and other stakeholders*

More significantly, PPS1 reads:

*Community involvement in planning should not be a reactive, tick-box, process. It should enable the local community to say what sort of place they want to live in at a stage when this can make a difference. Effective community involvement requires an approach which:*

- tells communities about emerging policies and proposals in good time;*
- enables communities to put forward ideas and suggestions and participate in developing proposals and options. **It is not sufficient to invite them to simply comment once these have been worked-up;***
- consults on formal proposals;*
- ensures that consultation takes place in locations that are widely accessible;*

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<sup>35</sup> “Community Involvement in Planning: The Government’s Objectives”  
[http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm\\_planning/documents/page/odpm\\_plan\\_027497.pdf](http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_planning/documents/page/odpm_plan_027497.pdf)

– provides and seeks feedback.

Combined with the proactive and plan-led approach required by planning guidance and discussed at page 24-25, the process undertaken in Shirley is clearly inadequate.

## SHIRLEY ADVANCE'S CONSULTATION

The Heart of Shirley proposals are currently undergoing a second period of consultation.

There are some flaws in the conducting of the first consultation (summer 2004) and extrapolation of its results as follows:

In the first consultation, of 520 people, when asked about their level of support for the proposal as a whole, 17.3% were fully supportive, while 33.3% were supportive but with reservations. 49.4% stated that they did not agree<sup>36</sup>. The total who oppose or have reservations is therefore 82.7%.

Then comes a request for brief comments "if you oppose the proposals or have reservations, please give brief details". 72.9% gave details, so the remaining 9.8% who are opposed or have reservations did not say why.

Furthermore, of the 72.9 who did give details, analysis states that 38.3% oppose the superstore, but a quick check of the other comments shows that many of these also express concerns about superstore issues or do not rule them out: for example "tacit support depending on development not including a superstore", "feel development will go ahead regardless of public opinion"; "general opposition", "will destroy local shops" and many others<sup>37</sup>. Of the 30 listed answers, 14 could relate to supermarket concerns in this way, even without including the category labelled "other". What we cannot deduce is how many individual people's responses were categorised under how many of these headings, but instead of an assumed contingent opposed to the superstore of 38.3%, all that can be deduced from this report is that only 17.3% were completely satisfied, and that opponents of the superstore element were *anywhere* between 27.9% and 82.7%. See Figures on page 34. Further examination of the individual response forms would clarify further, but not entirely.

There would be no need to be trying to deduce such information if Shirley Advance had included a specific question on support for the superstore element, as they did for every other element. The questionnaire (designed by Shirley Advance) asked consultees which of a list of other elements of the scheme they supported (e.g. improved park, residential units etc), but did not include the supermarket in this list of elements of the proposal<sup>38</sup>, so respondents were not given the opportunity to explicitly reject this element of the proposal, unless they took the initiative to mention it under "brief details". This is a particularly large flaw in the consultation, is misleading and bad practice.

Then the results of KSA's referendum become more significant. KSA conducted a referendum asking the specific question – "do you want another large supermarket in Shirley?" - the results were:

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<sup>36</sup> see <http://www.shirleyadvance.com/fullreport.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> see <http://www.shirleyadvance.com/fullreport.pdf> page 11

<sup>38</sup> see <http://www.shirleyadvance.com/fullreport.pdf> page 18

Total YES votes 262 (13%)  
Total NO votes 1706 (87%)<sup>39</sup>

(Total votes: 1968, i.e/ four times as many as responded to Shirley Advance's consultation).

Shirley Advance considers this referendum to be unclear in that it does not explain that without the supermarket, the rest of the development cannot go ahead<sup>40</sup>. It should be pointed out that neither the developer's consultation nor any surrounding communication from Shirley Advance or the Council has explained this either, so consultees have not been able to make an informed choice. The consequence is both distortion of results (some people have clearly considered the objection to the superstore to be a "minor reservation" without knowing that the Council are insisting that no development can go ahead without it) and no opportunity to challenge the assumption that strengthening of Shirley centre can only be achieved by another supermarket.

I do not consider either Shirley Advance's consultation process or KSA's referendum to be clearer than the other: both are flawed. Both are products of a process in which too much has been set in stone by the developer and council before enough evidence of benefits have been produced and before the public have been able to get involved.

In this second consultation options given, again, are "disagree with proposal"; "agree with minor reservations, OR "agree". This is equally as inadequate as the first consultation and it is not made clear to what extent elements and details are "up for negotiation".

On the matter of informed decision making, full retail impact assessments are not provided until the planning application stage. Normal though this may be, local people cannot make informed judgements on the proposals without a degree of information on this from which they can make up their minds: likely effects on other shops and traffic probably being the greatest of these. There is no reason why ball-park assessment of such criteria, or simply outlining potential effects, should not be possible, along the lines of the options analysis produced with much local authority consultation. In fact the absence of such information is one reason we produced this report: LWM may not be able to predict such effects accurately from the resources and time available to us but we can bring possibilities and examples to people's attention from an independent perspective.

Shirley Advance are now conducting extra consultation, via local schools, aimed at parents of schoolchildren: this could be seen to be significantly linked to the fact that approval for the plans was greater amongst parents with young children in the earlier consultation<sup>41</sup>. While it is clearly important to consult such people, one hopes that Shirley Advance are also making efforts to contact other sections of society to ensure consultation corresponds roughly to section proportions of population. It should be noted that previous full approval rate for the proposals was only 17.3%.

In our meeting with Shirley Advance and Mike Swallow, 21<sup>st</sup> December 2004, we asked Robert Birch "Has any element of the proposals changed in the light of public opinion from your first consultation?" Robert Birch's response was "They haven't changed, they have *evol/ved*". This highlights an unsound attitude to public consultation and we would again quote government guidance as above on consultation:

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<sup>39</sup> Full details of the referendum and how it was organised can be obtained from KSA

<sup>40</sup> Conversation with Robert Birch, 21<sup>st</sup> December 2004

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.shirleyadvance.com/fullreport.pdf>

*Community involvement requires an approach which... enables communities to put forward ideas and suggestions and participate in developing proposals and options. It is not sufficient to invite them to simply comment once these have been worked-up<sup>42</sup>;*

This is also in line with the UN Aarhus Convention<sup>43</sup> which the UK has signed.

Although the consultation is being carried out by Shirley Advance, the developer, rather than the Council, the Council has certainly allowed the proposals for the rebuilding of Shirley to get to a stage where the community is able only “to simply comment once these have been worked-up.”

Finally, the Retail Enterprise Network considers that support for the Heart of Shirley proposals was significantly lower than for similar developments elsewhere<sup>44</sup>. This deserves further investigation so that the views of the community can be properly ascertained.

### **Press coverage of the inevitability of the supermarket**

“No Alternative to Asda” Solihull News 14 May *“Some people do not seem to accept the facts that when the Council turned Asda down for the Powergen site in 1998 it was on the basis of finding a suitable site elsewhere. If we do not find an alternative, which was part of the Inspectors report, Asda would be perfectly entitled to return to the Powergen site.”* – Ted Richards, Council leader.

“Supermarket not up for negotiation” Solihull Times 21 May. *“Julian Wain, Solihull Strategic Director for Physical & Economic Regeneration, said the supermarket had to form part of the New Heart because of the outcome of a public enquiry following the failed bid for an Asda superstore on the former Powergen site. Mr Wain said the Inspector turned down the scheme on appeal but on the proviso a supermarket would form part of the new Heart for Shirley project”*

Following the referendum:

Solihull Times May 28 *“We have always been up front on this issue. Ever since planning permission for the superstore on the Powergen site was refused, the Government Inspector has said we must site the supermarket elsewhere. If we don't, he will put it out of town at further damage to Shirley town centre. Our consultation will set out what is non negotiable and what people can decide on.”*

Angharad Lynch, spokeswoman for Solihull Council.

When asked about these comments, during my meeting with Shirley Advance and the Council<sup>45</sup>, the reply was that this was “either a misquote by the newspaper or a lack of understanding on the part of the councillors, but that the truth of the situation was that if they did not find another alternative site for a supermarket in the centre of Shirley, Asda will definitely re-launch a planning application for the Powergen site, which they own”

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<sup>42</sup> PPS1

<sup>43</sup> The Aarhus Convention: the United Nations Economic Council for Europe Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters adopted in 1998 in the Danish city of Aarhus. This convention suggests that in any decision making process people should have rights to information, participation and redress.

<sup>44</sup> Correspondence with REN, 10<sup>th</sup> Feb 04

<sup>45</sup> Meeting with Robert Birch and Mike Swallow, 21<sup>st</sup> December 2004

The revised PPS6 makes out of town development harder; so it is now easier for Solihull Council to reject such applications. If this is true, the Heart of Shirley proposals cannot be justified as providing protection from an Asda proposal on the Powergen site.

It is still interesting that three members of the council were so strongly of the belief that they were under an obligation to provide a site for an Asda (not just "a superstore") elsewhere. It is difficult to see how Council decisions could have been made in an informed manner, considering this confusion.

Finally it does not seem that such an element being "not up for public consultation" is within policy guidelines such as PPS6 or PPS1.

### **Refusal to share information with LWM**

In December 2004 LWM sent two separate lists of questions to Robert Birch at Shirley Advance and Mike Swallow at the Council, to help produce an accurate report. These questions were, for example, "what indicators do you use to assess the health of Shirley centre?" On 12th January 2005 we received a joint email response from both parties refusing to answer any of these questions on the grounds that "Localise West Midlands has no direct experience of dealing with a mixed use project of this nature" and "will be completely biased in the favour of Keep Shirley Alive and therefore potentially unduly negative." We are happy to show this letter and the original questions asked to anyone who is interested.

Our response is as follows:

1. Our objectives are to see Shirley's local economy strengthened. This includes having a viable town centre. If this development is going to strengthen Shirley's town centre and local economy, then this is what we will reflect. We have seen much evidence that small scale local diversification is a type of economic activity that is particularly beneficial to real people in comparison to the "siphoning off" effects of multiples, but this objective needs to be reached by undoing the mistakes of the past - such as out of town development. We are therefore interested in whether, how and to what extent this proposal will influence Shirley's local economy for the better, not in opposing it on any sort of dogmatic principle.
2. The perspective that no-one who is, or could be, against the proposal should be granted access to information is a travesty of any definition of community involvement, openness and transparency.
3. It is by no means appropriate that two separate requests for information from a Council officer and a Developer should receive a joint response.

By these three mistakes there is no doubt at all that Council and developer attitudes have played in to the hands of, and increased, the "opposition" within the community.

## **CONCLUSIONS ON CONSULTATION AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

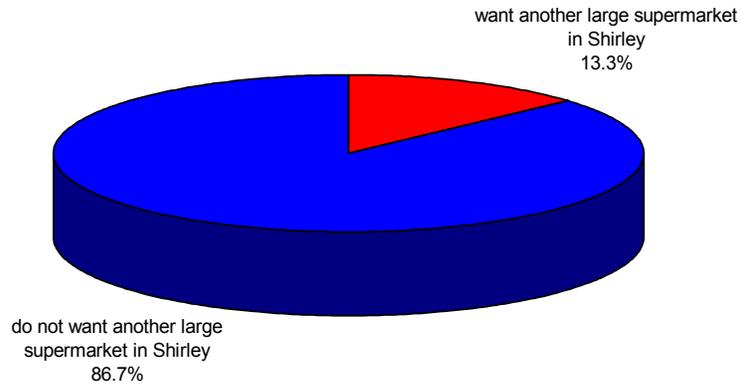
In conclusion there is a huge problem with the way the whole business has been conducted. Shirley Advance and the Council are keen to present the development as a whole package in which there is no room for significant change. The public are not at all encouraged to debate on the different components of the scheme but only told that the whole package is dependent on the supermarket and asked to judge the development as a whole. Consultation results are meaningless if there is no opportunity whatsoever to reconsider the component parts of the development separately. As previously discussed this does not conform to government guidance on proactive retail planning or community involvement and a development process that has such huge implications for a local community cannot be conducted behind the shield of "commercial confidentiality". Furthermore from the consultation that has been undertaken so far, support for the proposals is significantly lower than in similar cases and the reasons for this should be ascertained before the development goes further.

### **Recommendations:**

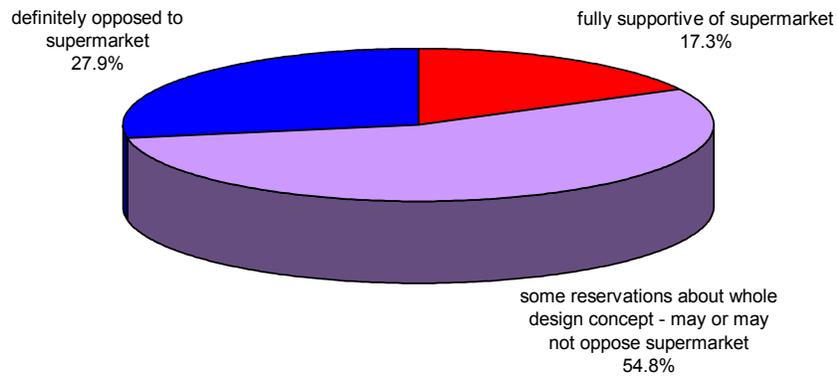
1. If the Council and Shirley Advance are not interested in re-running the consultation, they should at least ensure that they provide more information on their reasons for conducting the process as they have, including the origin of the different elements of their proposals and the scope of their brief to Shirley Advance. They should include options analysis. They should also commit to a fair and inclusive process of information sharing which does not exclude those who may or may not oppose elements of the development.
2. The Council should conduct a new process to identify Shirley's state of health, problems and appropriate solutions. This process should include full community participation, using models such as Planning for Real and at the very least conforming to standards outlined in the Community Involvement sections of PPS1 and PPS6
3. Those concerned to discover more about decisions taken within the council about the development as a whole, the superstore, and the inevitability of its imposition, could use the Freedom of Information Act to access as much information as possible. Much of this information may be subject to commercial confidentiality, but information could perhaps be released with identifying elements removed. We would be happy to advise on taking this further with interested parties.

# Percentage views on Heart of Shirley development

**KSA consultation  
N=1968**



**Shirley Advance consultation  
N=520**



## SECTION 5: RECOMMENDATIONS AND ALTERNATIVES

### QUESTIONS THAT SHOULD BE ASKED (AND ANSWERED)

- What is the exact level of commitment made by the council to a retailer on the provision of a site and when was it made? Can the council confirm, with detail, the objective and analytical basis for its pushing ahead of the superstore proposal? What efforts have been made to negotiate a smaller supermarket within the development?
- Could housing provide sufficient financing in place of a superstore **if** the latter is not wanted?
- If the *impact of and need for* development was not assessed at site selection stage, as it should have been, how does this impact upon decisions to be taken at planning application stage?
- How did the misrepresentation of truth in the Solihull newspapers (quoted on page 31) occur? - from journalist error, council error or other reasons?
- How is the complementarity of retailers in the new retail units going to be assessed and implemented?
- Is the development intended to serve the needs of Shirley or a wider catchment area?
- What origin and destination analysis has been done?

If it has not done so already, the Partnership should ensure that it remains involved with negotiations concerning: the lease on the land; the complementarity of new retail; the method and scope of retail impact assessment.

### RECOMMENDATIONS AND ALTERNATIVES

The Council should conduct a new process to identify Shirley's state of health, problems, needs and appropriate solutions. This process should include full community participation, using models such as Planning for Real and at the very least conforming to standards outlined in the Community Involvement sections of PPS1 and PPS6.

Health check methodology applied by the Partnership along lines suggested on page 24 would be appropriate.

Solihull Council or other stakeholders should consider using the LM3 tool as an extra indicator as North Norfolk Council, Cornwall NHS and others have done.

#### Going Back To The Drawing Board

- Put the Heart of Shirley proposals on hold
- Undertake a proper retail analysis and need assessment
- As recommended in PPS6, the Council should, with full community and Town Centre Partnership involvement, put together a local centre action plan
- Strategic objectives should be strengthening the centre for local economic and community benefits; and reducing the need to travel

- Undertake a Planning for Real exercise to find out what people actually want
- If further sites are needed for new development, an impact assessment should be made at site selection in compliance with government guidance.

If the development goes ahead, the Council should still undertake the assessments and involvement exercises described above although a lot more will have been set in stone.

## **ALTERNATIVE PLANS**

These are simply suggestions for consideration, as alternative plans would depend on the outcomes of the assessments and community involvement above.

### **Elements of sustainable development include:**

*promote a diverse economy with a wide range of employment opportunities; local jobs for local needs; reduce road traffic and the need to travel; meet known housing needs; strengthening the local economy; meeting leisure needs; favour public transport users.*<sup>46</sup>

- Mixed use
- Analysis of complementary retail
- Based on strategic objective of shortening journeys
- Methods of preserving and providing for increased independent shops
  - including restrictions on floor space (as per Lewes case study)
- Methods for attracting multiples
  - including provision of some larger retail units
- Building on existing character of the town centre area (architecture, materials, etc)
- “Alternative” attractants: an indoor market, farmers’ market, French or German markets, and food co-operatives have been successful elements elsewhere.
- Increase density of existing high street (in accordance with PPS6 page 9)

Much could be gained by adopting a similar approach to that in the Wolverhampton case study (see page 46) in terms of recognising and protecting the independent retail character while still ensuring the development remains attractive to investors.

Also see New Economics Foundation’s list of elements of a diverse local economy on page 26

Although the Heart of Shirley site is viable and may provide benefits with the right type of development, a larger number of smaller development sites integrated into Shirley High Street and interspersed between existing shops, offices and community facilities would have a far more positive effect on Shirley High Street and could still provide areas set some way back from the busy road for public use and a quieter retail environment. This could include the creation of larger units suitable for multiples and positive actions to encourage the retention of independent businesses.

Effectively, the same elements of the development if re-positioned along the High Street and not all in one edge-of-centre site would seem likely to strengthen the centre.

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<sup>46</sup> *from BUDD website “comments on brief”*

Research should be conducted as to whether, if the development goes ahead, Shirley can support further development on the high street, and in fact whether the Heart of Shirley development might catalyse such further development.

## **FINANCIAL ALTERNATIVES**

Housing might be able to provide enough to finance the new town centre (square and shop units)

Financing may come from land uses on both the Powergen and Heart of Shirley sites.

Planning for Real or similar will be helpful in gaining insight into what the community wants so that a community-led alternative can be put together, but a different level of input is needed to examine some of the economic alternatives. An independent group agreed by the council and community could put together alternative plans along with feasibility work on them.

A good compromise could be reached if a smaller development could be planned for the site. A steady stream of rental income is needed to make any development viable for the council.

### **Community Land Trust**

One possibility for financing and developing a scheme with long-term local benefits would be a Community Land Trust (CLT). CLTs hold the land value in trust so that leasehold property prices become affordable while the land trust has practical charitable (social inclusion/regeneration/poverty reduction) objectives. Land uses can be diverse and include small businesses and residential uses. The scheme captures value for reinvestment, regeneration and community benefit. The Trust is locally controlled and helps to fulfil the local authority's responsibilities for "promoting the economic, social and environment well being" of the neighbourhood. Funding can come from Section 106's on part of the site. A potential partner in such a scheme could potentially be the Co-operative group, who could contribute retail and other facilities at a more appropriate scale.

LWM can provide further information on CLTs on request.

## **HEART OF SHIRLEY; MAKING IT WORK FOR SHIRLEY**

If plans are approved the Council should ensure the following:

- More openness and transparency in the decision-making process, in terms of both acknowledging that there are public concerns that need addressing and willingness to share information
- Care should be taken that the superstore operator cannot easily escape planning conditions and other commitments made at the planning stage: e.g. no stringent time restrictions on car parking, need to produce receipt etc.
- Extra or replacement pedestrian exits onto High Street frontage
- No mezzanine floors allowed post-construction
- Superstore operator to replace an existing store currently further out-of-centre than the New Heart.
- Smaller superstore to be considered.

- Superstore to have proposed (or smaller) retail floorspace but on two floors to save space. Many superstores are now developing second levels. If this one is originally designed on two levels there are two potential benefits: a) local people and retailers are safe that they will not get an unwanted extension as the operator puts in a second floor at a later stage and b) if the footprint of the store is lessened, there could be some rearrangement of the site that removes the need to build on park land.
- Local sourcing of construction material; local sourcing agreements; local labour agreements and using local companies for services to maximise local benefit in face of some disbenefits. Some of these could be section 106 agreements.
- Build on local character (e.g. brickwork)
- Some smaller units suitable for independent shops within the new development for greater variety (see Wolverhampton case study, p46)
- Letting strategy that facilitates letting to independents
- Marketing of units so as not to exclude independent traders as well as multiples
- Existing retailers, especially those displaced by the development, to be offered good rates in the new centre.

(A slight problem is that if existing retailers are given options on the new development this could further weaken the existing centre).

#### **Partnership activity to maximise benefits and minimise ill effects**

Traders and stakeholders in the rest of Shirley could devote their resources to working out a strategy, whether this be a) accepting the need to move the whole high street along towards the new development, and thus working out a strategy to achieve this, or b) a strategy for maintaining the High Street and for encouraging further development, new units etc to spread from the new Heart towards the rest of the centre.

A united publicity scheme, perhaps along the line of the “Loyal to Leominster” loyalty card and “Haverfordwest Independent Traders’ Area” scheme, may help (see case studies p48).

#### **CONCLUSIONS NOT SPECIFIC TO SHIRLEY**

- More research is needed on the effects of edge- and in-centre superstores: data needs to be collected by Councils, NEF, and other bodies with an interest in economics and retail.
- More post-opening health checks and impact studies are needed
- There may be some positive case studies of community led town centre designs have become possible; it would be of benefit to collate these as a good practice guide.
- More needed from the Government on supporting independent retail and understanding or acknowledging local economics

## **APPENDIX 1: CASE STUDIES**

### ***Introduction - and a word of caution***

It has been difficult to find appropriate case studies of in-centre large superstores let alone of in-centre mixed use development that includes residential and smaller shop units as well as a large superstore. Much past research by the private sector, NGOs and government has concentrated on the effects of out-of-town development, and much more exists on simple superstore developments than mixed use. Comparisons are therefore not always conclusive, but by taking several case studies together it has been possible to build up some possible scenarios.

Another problem has been finding much more than anecdotal evidence. Rarely do local authorities carry out post-opening surveys of town centres after development, and as discussion on page 39 suggests, measuring resultant town centre health is not an exact science. Also, the time available to undertake this research has been necessarily very limited. We are happy to discuss any of these case studies further. Solihull Council and Shirley Advance also seem to hold views based on anecdotal evidence<sup>47</sup>, so the value is comparable.

We would therefore suggest that these case studies be used more as pointers to the questions that need to be asked, suitable directions for further research, and ways in which positive impacts can be maximised and negative impacts minimised, than as conclusive evidence as to whether Shirley is likely to be positively or negatively impacted by the Heart of Shirley Development.

Some case studies have been found in publications by Friends of the Earth and the New Economics Foundation, as these organisations have worked on and documented ways to sustain and strengthen local centres. Such publications contain references to their original sources and we are sure that staff of these organisations would be happy to provide further information if anyone requires it.

### **Two case studies related to the clawback argument**

#### **4.3.5. The clawback of trade argument**

*The supermarkets use the **clawback of trade** argument to say they benefit small-town shops this way. This argument was used to justify the opening of a supermarket in Exmouth, Devon, because it would keep shoppers in Exmouth rather than them travelling to Exeter. In Garstang, Lancashire, a Booths supermarket and a Safeway supermarket did improve the trade of Garstang's smaller shops because the supermarkets provided free parking. However in Knutsford, Cheshire, the Booth's supermarket apparently reduced the trade of Knutsford's small shops, despite also providing free parking, because there was a main road separating the supermarket car park from the old town centre.*

*Clawback of trade may work if the pedestrian flows to the supermarket entrance pass smaller shops. Small shops in the Bramley Centre, west Leeds, co-exist with a large Morrison, and*

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<sup>47</sup> Letter from Shirley Advance and Solihull Council, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2004

*the small butcher can sell specialty meats not stocked by the supermarket. However in Brigg surveys indicated that shoppers in the town centre were not using the Tesco a hundred metres or so away, and vice versa. This was despite the Tesco having a large free car park, and allowing non-Tesco shoppers to use this; otherwise Brigg visitors would have to use a pay and display car park. This may be because flows to the Brigg Tesco came off the bypass, and the route to the town centre was further on past the backs of the shops. Had the town centre been between the free car park and the Tesco, some shopping synergy would probably have resulted.*

**Source:** “Current Trends and issues in Food Retailing for supermarkets” on an information website on food deserts, coordinated by Hillary Shaw, School of Geography, University of Leeds. <http://www.fooddeserts.org/images/cursup.htm>

#### **Conclusions for Shirley:**

- 1) Linkages are important: to place new parking so that the route leads shoppers through the town centre would be more beneficial.
- 2) Small convenience retailers in an urban local centre can co-exist with a superstore if they stock speciality products the superstore is unlikely to stock, and if pedestrian flows pass other shops on the way to the superstore.

**‘The Role and Vitality of Secondary Shopping – a New Direction’**, for the National Retail Planning Forum, November 2004

This report, contains several case studies on the impacts of superstores on centres and further details can be found on NRPF’s website, [www.nrpf.org](http://www.nrpf.org). We have not included any here as, having received the report rather late, their findings largely reinforced our own rather than contributing any new insights relevant to Shirley. However it seems a useful report and we recommend it to those sufficiently interested.

#### **Edge of Centre case studies – Cirencester and Fakenham**

**44.***In our two edge-of-centre case studies, the principal effect of the new stores was to divert trade from the town centre to the edge-of-centre locations, although this result may reflect the particular circumstances of these towns. Where there is already a well established non central superstore (e.g. Tesco in Cirencester) it is unlikely that an additional edge-of-centre store will achieve the same level of clawback.*

**45.***Our research shows that large, highly accessible superstores are likely to achieve higher levels of clawback than smaller, less accessible stores, irrespective of location. For example, in Fakenham some 46% of the trade of the out-of-centre Sainsbury is derived from clawback of expenditure. However, in this and other case study towns, this has led to no tangible benefit to the town/district centre.*

**50.***In both our edge-of-centre case studies, there was a significant displacement of retailing activity from the town centres; principally as a result of the closure of the town's main town centre foodstores. Whilst neither centre was significantly adversely affected as a whole, neither benefited from the development of the edge-of-centre foodstores. If the catchment of both these towns had been sufficiently large to enable both the town centre and edge-of-centre stores to continue to trade well, we anticipate that our conclusions would have been different.*

Source: DETR report The Impact of Large Foodstores on Market Towns and District Centres

#### **Conclusions for Shirley:**

- 1) Large foodstores achieve more clawback than smaller foodstores; but this can lead to no tangible benefit to the rest of the town
- 2) Clawback to the town centre resulting from an edge-of-centre store is less likely when there is an existing well-established non-central foodstore, and is dependent on the combination of catchment area and local foodstores.
- 2) The new superstore may close food retailers that are closer to the town centre.

### **Blackheath, Sandwell**

*Since the early 1980's, there had been developer interest in building a large foodstore within Blackheath town centre. This conformed with Sandwell Council's planning policies to focus retail activity within key district centres, and in 1992 the UDP allocated a site on the edge of the existing shopping centre for a foodstore.*

*More detailed plans emerged over the period 1994-1996, with the council assisting the developer to assemble the site, using its compulsory purchase powers. Initially, the development was purely speculative, but as the project moved on, Sainsbury's announced themselves as development partner and store operator.*

*Based on experiences in another centre, where a large foodstore had failed to reinvigorate a declining centre, the council worked in partnership with the local traders association [BBCA] to ensure maximum synergy between the new store and existing shops, especially for those who arrive on foot or by public transport. Traders did initially have concerns, partly because we had no examples within the Borough of large stores successfully being built in towns where those towns actually received any obvious spin-off benefits. However, Blackheath was felt to be a popular and thriving centre, with a wide range of shops, other businesses and an indoor market, which were expected to compete well against a superstore.*

*This development also provided a section of the town's ring road. Originally the store was sited outside the ringroad, but we succeeded, with the traders' support, to reconfigure it within the ring road as it was felt this siting would produce more spin-off trade.*

*Together, the 5700 sq m [61,000 sq ft] store, along with petrol filling station, 440 car parking spaces and ring road, opened in mid 1997. The store has traded well from the outset, and within 5 years the company began examining options for expansion. This is partly in response to recent and proposed developments by competitors, within nearby centres [such as Cradley Heath] and on out-of-town sites [for example M5 Junction 2 and Quinton Bus Depot].*

*It is believed that Sainsbury's has been responsible for attracting additional shoppers into Blackheath, particularly from relatively more affluent districts to the south, without easy access to alternative stores. Whilst several convenience retailers (butchers, greengrocers, a small supermarket) within the town have closed down, overall the economic health of the centre remains good, with relatively few vacant units and an air of busy-ness around the centre. There remain two other supermarkets trading in the town, one locally-owned, the other a national chain operating at the value end of the market.*

*The council would like to gain some evidence/analysis of the effect that Sainsburys has had on the town, but hard quantifiable evidence is hard to come by due to.. a great many external factors that can influence the prosperity/attractiveness of a town.*

(Sources: Alan Reynolds; Mary Docker, local councillor and Blackheath Business Association)

**Conclusions for Shirley:** There can be positive impacts from an edge-of-centre superstore for some retail and general footfall, although convenience retail seemed to be negatively affected. One of the reasons for the positive impact of this superstore on the town centre is that the centre has an “outside” catchment area including a relatively wealthy residential area with no superstore of its own. We do not know whether Shirley has a similar catchment area without its own store; thus origin and destination analysis would have been useful before the decision was made by Solihull MBC to seek a superstore on this site. Blackheath is an area of greater deprivation than Shirley and more of its local shops cater for this market. Regarding protection from further supermarkets proposed nearby, planning guidance has now tightened up on out of town developments so it is important to find out whether or not Shirley would have similar issues, as has been suggested in the media and elsewhere. This development just involved the superstore, rather than including other retail units.

### **Brighton**

*This proposed mixed use, edge of centre development of the Brighton station site focused around a Sainsbury's superstore and car park.*

*“The Council has now acknowledged that the most controversial and unpopular aspect of this scheme, the supermarket and car park, has only been included in the Planning Brief to provide upfront cash and so help finance the rest of it. This is despite Council advisors’ own reports that indicate: a) that another form of development, such as a housing-led scheme, would be viable and b) that there is no quantitative or qualitative need for another supermarket. In other words, the superstore and car park are not there to satisfy social needs, but the wish of the landowners to make maximum profit. This goes against government planning policy guidelines, which state that development should be based on need not on profit<sup>48</sup>.”*

The proposal including the superstore has been approved and is being built – so this is too early to give effects. Brighton Urban Design and Development argued that housing should generate enough value to support the rest of the development.

(Source: Brighton Urban Design and Development campaign group and sustainable development NGO)

### **Conclusions for Shirley:**

There could obviously be financing parallels with the Heart of Shirley proposals, given recent media reports. Could housing on part of the Shirley site provide sufficient financing for an alternative scheme?

### **Bury St Edmunds**

No supermarket proposal here, but concerns re the development of the town centre

*Bury, already firmly a clone town, could be set to become entrenched its clone status yet further losing the last vestiges of its past as a historic market town. The 8-9 acre cattle market in the centre of town is currently the subject of a £75 million re-development proposal fronted by*

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<sup>48</sup> Brighton Urban Design and Development newsletter: [www.buddbrighton.org/](http://www.buddbrighton.org/)

*Centros Miller, developers responsible for the N1 development in Islington amongst others. The proposal for a 32 shop development to include a large new Debenhams faces wide opposition from the local community (from both businesses and residents. A parish poll revealed overwhelming local opposition to the scheme, but it seems that the council are likely to push ahead regardless. Local feeling is that some re-development of the site is necessary, but that the current plan is total overkill which will suck trade away from the town's historic centre. As I understand it, a number of alternative proposals for the site have been put forward by the Chamber of Commerce, the Bury Society and the Suffolk Preservation Society all of which have been ignored by the council. The Chamber of Commerce is vehemently opposed to plans, and its chair vocal in her opposition. There are also a number of local independent traders able to speak eloquently on the threat posed by the plans, for example, quoted on the front page of the East Anglian Daily Times:*

*Alan Jary, who has run a gift shop in the town for 50 years, said: "We want to stop developers coming along and wiping out people like me. This new development will only make us a clone town. People come to this town for the specialised shops because we can offer something that bit different. Bury is individual and unique and we must preserve that."*

Source: Ruth Potts, New Economics Foundation, by email

### **Conclusions for Shirley:**

As this proposal has not yet been fully approved there can be no lessons on impacts for Shirley, but those involved maybe useful contacts for those seeking more information on alternative proposals and how the process is likely to continue.

### **Fakenham, Norfolk**

Fakenham was a small market town with no supermarkets "of any reasonable size". A district wide retail study in 1993 identified the need for additional retail floorspace and subsequently an application for a 25,000 sq ft edge-of-centre Safeway was approved. Another application at the same time was refused because the study found that only one supermarket should be approved and that a second would be damaging.

In fact, despite these findings, after the Safeway opened in 1994-5 there was in any case a significant loss of trade to the local convenience retail and a decrease in town centre quality (33% increase in vacancies etc, 72% loss of convenience retailers). Now, a new application is in progress for an in-centre Tesco, and the Council believe this will bring people back in to the town centre. A second retail study is now being carried out to assess future needs and capacity.

(Source: Gary Alexander, Forward Planning, North Norfolk District Council)

### **Conclusions for Shirley:**

The initial 1993 retail study for this area failed to predict damage from the one edge of centre development to the town centre. Have retail study methods have changed to ensure that new retail studies would make more accurate predictions? The elderly studies on which the Heart of Shirley development was based should be revisited, and a new retail study conducted if necessary.

### **Hove, East Sussex**

The new Tesco in Hove took land from the town's car park, reducing it to a third of its size, and at the same time limited parking in its own car park to two hours with a Tesco receipt as

proof. Although the store is said to have attracted 30,000 new shoppers to the local trading area, reports in the Grocer magazine say that local traders have noticed a loss, not an increase, in trade: quoted in the Grocer:

*"Since Tesco moved in, the company has gone against the co-operative spirit of its early negotiations and its car park has changed shoppers' habits in George Street – to the detriment of local traders".* Chairman of Hove Business Association

*"Our takings are down 12-15% and parking is the main issue. We're not ready to pack it in yet but we are losing about £600 a week profit".* Proprietor of local off-license

*"Before Tesco opened, I used to shop on George Street regularly. There are nice shoe shops and I would usually have a coffee somewhere too. But two hour's parking doesn't give me enough time to do that and the supermarket shop. I feel sorry for the George Street traders – I think they are missing out."* Shopper, mother of three.

**Source:** The Grocer, 2004, *In the Shadow of a giant*, 7 February 2004

### **Conclusions for Shirley:**

This case highlights potential effects of a superstore if care is not taken with planning conditions and other agreements and then enforcing them. Similar impacts were observed in Stalham, Norfolk. The Heart of Shirley plans include a degree of commitment that the car park is intended to serve the rest of the community, but negotiations on this will need to lead to binding agreements against the sorts of behaviour mentioned above if the car park is genuinely to be of lasting benefit to existing shops.

### **Leominster**

A Somerfield supermarket (below 30,000 sq ft) was opened in Leominster in the early nineties, in an edge-centre location just behind the High Street shops. There was very little, if any, negative effect on local retail, even the food retailers.

**Conclusion for Shirley:** A small central supermarket may have little negative effect on a local centre. However, Leominster had no other supermarket at the time. Shirley has much more existing provision.

So when the out-of-centre Safeway was proposed a couple of years later local traders took little interest at the time, but after the store was built they really felt the impact. Research by the DETR revealed that when Safeway opened the store, many of the town's small shops lost 30% of their trade. *[NB the Safeway is an out of centre example included only in relation to the Loyalty scheme described below.]*

A successful loyalty card scheme "Loyal to Leominster" was then launched to help raise awareness among consumers about the need to support local businesses. Traders paid £25 to join, and for this some money went into a central advertising fund, and they received a starter pack containing cards to give away, and posters on which to write their own consumer incentives: incentives were decided by each local shop rather than as a blanket discount. The scheme was monitored by retail specialists at Surrey University and is believed to have catalysed the successful recovery of the centre.

**Source:** *Graham Hurley, then local trader*

**Conclusion for Shirley:** The local shop loyalty card scheme is a method that can be used by town centre partners to mitigate or prevent any negative effects on local trade, certainly in the short term.

### **Monmouth**

*Waitrose opened in Monmouth in '95. The town was losing trade because there was no good quality supermarket (there was Somerfield). Waitrose has drawn people in and there has been a knock-on improvement in trade for the 'ordinary' shops.*

*But.. it has also caused the loss of some shops who were doubling up on what Waitrose offer. Unfortunately Waitrose has been given planning permission to build an in-store cafe. This was one area that is amply covered by local enterprises. (Waitrose are located in the town). Also, Marks & Spencers are opening a 'Simply Food' in January about 100yds from Waitrose. We shall see what impact that has.*

*There seem to be pluses as well as minuses, but they have to be managed and the local authorities are not doing that, probably because they are not allowed to. (local authority employee, by email)"*

### **Conclusion for Shirley:**

- 1) There can be positive effects on some shops and on the overall town centre footfall and clawback from an in-town superstore but less on shops offering the same goods as the supermarket. For a 42,000 sq ft superstore selling "non-food" goods, as the Heart of Shirley's is proposed to be, this may encompass a fair range of shops.
- 2) This is more anecdotal evidence of problems with managing and restricting the behaviour of superstores and Shirley needs to ensure that this is done stringently to avoid ill-effects.

### **Moseley**

Moseley is a suburban village in the Birmingham local authority area. Although it has a fair number of local shops, mostly independents, and a small Kwiksave, for shopping it tended to lose its own residents to the nearby Kings Heath centre which has a couple of large supermarkets. An application came in for a Sainsburys Local. Like Shirley, many Moseley people appreciate the character of their local centre and do not want to see it taken over by chain monoculture. Therefore there was some reluctance on the part of local people to see Sainsburys move in, but also a recognition that the centre would need strengthening and that Sainsburys could provide this; so there was no real opposition to the development, especially given its appropriate scale for the town centre.

However, due to the small size of the supermarket the result has been to retain some of the Moseley population previously travelling to Kings Heath while not bringing in excess traffic to Moseley, as a larger supermarket might have done, or taking footfall away from local independent shops. The independent greengrocer did indeed close down, but it seems this was a personal decision rather than being affected by a reduction in trade. There are now rumours that the very popular independent bakery is suffering. The centre has had a farmer's market for a couple of years, which is successful, popular and brings in increased footfall on one day a month.

Sources: members of local neighbourhood forum

### **Conclusions for Shirley:**

- 1) This is a good example of successfully using a supermarket to claw back trade from neighbouring centres or out of town developments; although the store is only a small “Local” type, as compared with Shirley’s proposed superstore. In Moseley there seems to have been more local examination of what would be *needed* within the catchment area.
- 2) Activities such as Farmers Markets draw in a good level of trade and are helpful in revitalising a centre, although limited by their occasional nature. Perhaps as part of much greater solutions Shirley’s Farmers’ Market could be promoted and given a more prominent location if required.

### **Selly Oak**

The 32,000 sq ft Sainsburys in Selly Oak was built in the early 80s. The building was in a central location but was designed to turn its doorless and windowless back on the Selly Oak shops and is generally very badly linked to anything but its own car park, as well as being on a triangle between three busy roads. There is now very little left of the Selly Oak shops. This was probably exacerbated by the general trend of housing and business down toward the University area at Bournbrook which has become known as the centre of Selly Oak.

**Source:** own local knowledge

**Conclusions for Shirley:** The Selly Oak range of shops was not large even before the superstore was built. A stronger, larger centre such as Shirley will have a higher percentage of shoppers making linked trips if linkages are sufficient. (see page 10 for discussion of linkages)

Good design is also important in terms of making linkages, and the Selly Oak superstore was a notoriously bad example, whereas there are finer points of design in the Heart of Shirley that would be much more beneficial.

### **Stalham, Norfolk**

Tesco opened on the edge of Stalham two years ago and it has already affected local shops’ trade so much that some shops have closed down and others are thinking of selling up. Stalham is a market town and Tesco built its car park on the market site promising that the market could continue on Tuesday mornings. But once its store was open, Tesco backtracked on this promise and the council had to relocate the market to a much less suitable site where it has now dwindled to a few stalls. As in Hove, parking at Tesco is restricted to two hours and traders report that shoppers do not walk from the Tesco store to the high street.

*“This is a family business, trading for 34 years but we’ve had a 35% drop in trade in the last two years [since Tesco opened], I don’t want to sell up but I don’t think I can stay in business much longer”* James Cawdron, Butcher, Stalham

*“Before Tesco opened Stalham was a thriving market town, but now nobody walks to the high street my business is down 40%”* Candy Sheridan, shopkeeper, Stalham

From [http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/pps6\\_damage\\_town\\_centres.pdf](http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/pps6_damage_town_centres.pdf)

**Conclusions for Shirley:** This case study was included not due to its similarity with Shirley but as an example of post-opening behaviour on the part of the supermarket. It is absolutely essential that if the Heart of Shirley proposals are approved, Solihull Council ensures that

every condition of the application is adhered to by the superstore operator and other stakeholders.

### **Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol**

Westbury-on-Trym is an urban village currently well served by small local retailers and a small Somerfield. There are at least seven supermarkets within approx. four miles, including a very large Wal-Mart. Sainsbury's have applied for planning permission on an in-centre site to build a 15,000 square feet store and an extension to an existing car park. The land in question is designated in the Local Plan as 'open space for recreational and leisure purposes'. The land is made up of individually owned allotments, some of which are subject to restrictive covenants. Westbury-on-Trym is a conservation area.

#### **From Westbury-on-Trym Bristol City Council case officer's report:**

*In any event, it is considered that it is simply not possible to predict with any degree of assurance what the impact of the superstore would be in economic terms on the Centre. The proposed Sainsbury's store would undoubtedly have an impact on shopping patterns in Westbury on Trym, and the composition of shops and businesses may well change, however the vitality and viability of the Centre as a whole may not be adversely affected.*

*The issue of concern is not the introduction of new retail development into the Centre, which is in accordance with Government guidance and Local Plan policy, but the impact of the development through its proposed location and size. These concerns are discussed in Key Issues A and B of this report and have led to the conclusion that the proposal does not comply with Policy S2 (II) parts (a) and (b), in that the development would adversely affect the historic character of the Centre and its environs, and would give rise to unacceptable vehicular traffic conditions.*

The impact assessment for this application estimated a drop in income of around 8% for existing shops.

**Conclusions for Shirley:** the comment on impacts changing the "composition of shops" but not necessarily the "vitality and viability" of the centre may well be applicable to Shirley, as may be the conclusion that the location and size of the development are the crucial non-compliant factors.

### **North View, Bristol**

Near Westbury-on-Trym and referred to as a case study in the Case Officer's report. Contention over what impact that superstore had on the local area. But then this was in-centre too.

*In their response, the agents refer to the impact of the Waitrose store in North View and make the following comments.*

*\* At the time the Waitrose store opened in 1973 the retail centre consisted of a higher proportion of convenience shopping units than at present (10 units compared to 6) and a smaller proportion of comparison shopping units (7 compared to 12). The number of service units has risen from 8 to 10, and the number of vacant and unclassified units is the same for both years.*

*\* The retail composition has therefore changed so that comparison shopping and service uses are dominant at the expense of the number of convenience units, although it is noted that some convenience shops such as butchers and fishmongers are able to remain viable in the centre despite the proximity of the competing*

*Waitrose store.*

*\* At the time the agents letter was written (January 2003) there were no vacant units on the defined shopping frontages of the North View/Northumbria Drive Local Centre, levels of pedestrian activity were observed to be "high" and the physical environment was of good quality. These characteristics suggest that the centre exhibits good levels of vitality and viability.*

*\* It can therefore be observed that the arrival of the Waitrose store may have altered shopping patterns and may have lead to changes in retail composition within the centre. It may also be concluded that the vitality and viability of the centre has not been adversely affected.*

### **Conclusions for Shirley:**

As Westbury on retail types.

### **Case studies of locally sensitive development**

#### **Haverfordwest**

I spoke to Steven Hopkins of Haverfordwest "Top of Town Traders", an independent traders' association. Initially concerned about traffic movements, independent traders in the top of the town came together to form an independent traders' association, the Top of Town Traders which began to proactively market the top end of the Town as an Independent Traders Area. This was in response to a steady influx of chain shops and supermarkets into the bottom end of the town. Their marketing includes a large banner hung across the street saying just that, and other publicity measures.

This has raised the profile of the importance of these traders and has helped support those businesses.

**Conclusions for Shirley:** some methods here that can be used if the development goes ahead and if impacts are negative.

#### **Leominster**

The Loyal to Leominster scheme: see Leominster case study above

#### **Lewes**

*Despite its location between London and Brighton, Lewes in East Sussex has so far managed to keep much of its traditional character and sense of individuality. According to local shop owners, much of this is due to strict planning regulation, which prevents chain stores from getting the size of shop floors that they demand. In general, the size of shop floors and the frontage can further enhance the clone town feeling on high streets which have several chain stores. In Lewes, chain stores have even been known to pull out, due to shop floor restrictions, leaving some local shops with a better chance of survival.*

**Source:** Clone Town Britain, New Economics Foundation, p5

**Conclusions for Shirley:** This approach could be used, to a degree dependent on what is decided by council and community on a proactive local retail plan.

#### **Wolverhampton**

Wolverhampton is currently planning for a Shopping Core Expansion as part of its regeneration. This comprises a new mixed use development including retail. The brief for

competing developers specified that the independent retail character of the area, which Wolverhampton considers one of its strengths, should be protected and enhanced by the development. AM Development, an 'unusual' developer based on mainland Europe, won the contract.

Their scheme will be built along traditional streetscape lines in order to help preserve the character of the area, including some refurbishment of existing buildings and some new build. The plan is to include prime frontages and lower value areas to ensure that a variety of unit types and prices are available so that independent retailers are not excluded, although they will ensure there are also a number of multiples in order to draw in investors. AM Development feel that in a mixed use environment such as this where housing is included, there needs to be a full mixture of independent and multiple retailing and a level of variety that does not just cater for 'upmarket' shopping. They recognise the need for economic sustainability and say that this approach contributes to it.

It is worth emphasising that from the Council's and developer's point of view this is not about protecting individual retailers but about protecting an individual retail character.

The development does not include a large food superstore because there are other large superstores existing or planned nearby already.

Source: Eileen Molloy, AM Developments

### **Conclusions for Shirley**

The proposals for Wolverhampton are much bigger than those for Shirley, but the approach taken by the developer and the Council could definitely be appropriate and beneficial to Wolverhampton in terms of building on the traditional character and streetscape of the area, and protecting the volume and character of independent retail including different levels of retail value.

### **Granollers, Catalonia, Spain**

*The motto of the Gran Centre Granollers Retail Trade Association is "city, culture and commerce". This ethical vision statement, which seeks to reclaim the heritage and urban landscape of the town of Granollers (northeastern Spain) for its people, has been the bedrock of a new breed of innovative retailer-led town centre management schemes in Spain. As with many other schemes of this type, Gran Centre Granollers was founded as a response to profound changes affecting the behaviour of Spanish consumers leading to a loss of community spirit and a progressive erosion of the socio-economic role that the small retail sector had always played in the fabric of urban and rural communities. This paper explores some of the elements that have allowed this unusual initiative to succeed through the direct involvement of a wide range of stakeholders and its ability to capture the imagination of Granollers' residents which has culminated in their personal identification with the scheme's vision, purpose and values. Not only has the "Gran Centre Granollers" Retail Trade Association grown from a handful of retailers in 1994 to 300 scheme members in less than 10 years, a number which now represents 75% of the independent retailers and business located in the town centre of Granollers, but the association has also developed its own customer loyalty credit card scheme. The membership and resulting income from this scheme has risen steadily to account currently for 14% of the association's annual budget of 312,500 Euro (£212,530).*

*...Gran Centre Granollers has pursued an unusually visionary model of town centre management, inspired by the collective ethos and values of its founding members, that goes beyond the direct business benefit goal expressed by independent retailers in prior research studies (Medway et al, 2000). Their model is one that encompasses and embraces quality of life as a manifestation of an egalitarian and tolerant society proud of its local heritage (of which retail forms an important part) while responsive and supportive towards global problems.*

Source: "Gran Centre Granollers – city, culture and commerce", J. Andres Coca-Stefaniak, Cathy Parker et al, Retail Enterprise Network, Sept 2004

**Conclusions for Shirley:** This case study is a phenomenal example of a community regaining control of their economic circumstances, and is included more for inspiration than for immediate practical use. The report is available from the Retail Enterprise Network.