



## "L.I.V.E" Local, Independent, Vibrant Economy

### Introduction

"Between 1995 and 2000, we lost one fifth of our local shops and services including post-offices, banks, butchers and grocers."

"In 1960, small independent retailers had a 60% share of the food retail market. By 2000, their share was reduced to 6% while the multiples share increased to 88%."

Our local high streets and shops are dying. Independent shops in the town centre are closing down and taking cinemas, cafes and banks with them. They leave behind deserted high streets and communities which are isolated from essential services.

Local food producers are also dying. We lose on average 17,000 farmers per year. These are overwhelmingly the small and family farmers who face such low farm gate prices - often below the cost of production – with the result that they either intensify production or go bankrupt.

Both local high streets, and local food producers are being damaged by chains and large out-of-town superstores. These attract customers away from independent shops and overwhelmingly source their produce from abroad, and their services "in house". The net result is that money is being drained out of the local economy and redirected towards just a few large farms or large businesses.

Maidstone Business Improvement District (BID) = 1% increase on business rates to fund transport, safety, cleanliness of streets and advertising.

### Local, Independent: local shops

Chain superstores and edge-of-centre malls are killing local economies. Edge-of-centre superstores are drawing customers away from the High Streets to the outskirts of town. Chain supermarkets - in or out of the town centre - are forcing the closure of independent shops through their aggressive pricing tactics and brand familiarity.

Chains overwhelmingly source their produce from abroad, use "in house" services and delivery networks, and favour the larger producers. The net result of edge-of-town superstores and chain supermarkets is the same: money that could be circulating around myriad local shops and services instead circulates around a few large businesses.

Just one unsuitable out-of-town store can:

- Close down every village shop within a seven mile radius.
- Generate £25,000 of pollution damages per week (mainly through car trips).

- Lose a community 276 jobs.

On the other hand, local, independent shops bring enormous social and economic benefits to the community. Money spent in a high street circulates around the local economy and generate more jobs, for example 81 shops in Suffolk employed 548 people and sourced food from 295 local producers.

Local authorities often grant planning permission to superstores and edge-of-centre malls because they mistakenly believe that they are good for the economy, or because the superstores offer vast amounts of money towards, for example, a new library in return for planning permission.

### **Vibrant Economy: local food**

Local farmers and producers are increasingly being cut out of the food chain. 75% of the grocery retail market is dominated by just 4 big supermarkets, who overwhelmingly source their food from abroad and who tend to favour big producers and processors.

Meanwhile EU procurement rules ban local authorities from favouring food from local sources over non-local sources.

Local food schemes - such as farmer's markets, local procurement, and organic box schemes - are overwhelmingly beneficial. The benefits are:

#### **Economic**

- £10.00 spent on an organic box scheme could generate £24.00 for the local economy. £10.00 spent at a supermarket might generate just £14.00 for the local economy.

- A farmers market can generate 30% more for local business.

#### **Environmental**

- Local food travels shorter distances and creates less pollution.

#### **Health**

- Local, organic school food schemes have doubled the school meal uptake

- Local food is less processed.

Stuart Jeffery, Maidstone Green Party.  
[www.maidstone.greenparty.org.uk](http://www.maidstone.greenparty.org.uk)  
[stuart@maidstone.greenparty.org.uk](mailto:stuart@maidstone.greenparty.org.uk)

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