

My St Margarets

St Margarets



..... SPECIAL UPDATE FROM YOUR LOCAL TRADERS

A plan for St Margarets...

We love St Margarets and care that it retains its village atmosphere and unique identity. We don't want St Margarets to become another faceless town dominated by the major multiples or allow it to deteriorate to an area plagued by unsightly and vacant shop units. The St Margarets Traders Association (SMTA) has been working hard to ensure that we promote and protect all that is special about St Margarets.

In a sample survey 50 residents commented that the one business that St Margarets needs is a good bakery. A fishmonger was also strongly favoured. With a quality bakery and fishmongers in St Margarets we would increase our speciality food offer and in doing so attract and keep more shoppers in St Margarets. Many traders have said that they are losing trade at weekends and holidays when our regular local customers travel further afield to the likes of Richmond, Teddington and Kingston, often to buy merchandise that they would buy in St Margarets but are presently unable to do so.

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Availability of Retail Units

St Margarets has enjoyed almost full occupancy of retail units for many years with little availability of empty units. However, due to recent circumstances there are currently a handful of shops empty and not trading. While this might give the impression that we have empty shops looking for tenants, unfortunately none of these units are available to rent.

FOR EXAMPLE

126 St Margarets Road, the former Village Cafe, this structure is in need of repair. The building owners are considering demolishing the

building. The traders and council are keen that this should be retained as an A1 unit and in respect of this they have opened dialogue with the owners, hopefully to look at ways of retaining this unit for retail.

123 St Margarets Road, the former Gaia Wholefoods site. This building is near completion of structural repairs after which Gaia Wholefoods will return to the site. The shop they have been occupying on a temporary basis has already been let to a new business.

With the lack of A1 retail space in St Margarets it is obviously difficult to attract new businesses. The St Margarets Traders Association has created a database of businesses that are interested in opening in St Margarets with the intention of alerting these businesses of any premises that should become available and so help to ensure that any available units are not left vacant for longer than necessary.

New Opportunities for retail

Recently two former office usage units have become empty and it is hoped that these units will become retail units to help reduce the existing shortage in the area. The SMTA has highlighted the availability of these units to a number of businesses and it is hoped that Richmond Council will approve any change of use applications to A1 retail for these sites. The businesses interested in opening on these sites includes a bakery company, something St Margarets so desperately needs. The association has had several meetings with the bakery company and is doing all it can to help the company move into St Margarets.

The association also recognises that there are other opportunities to encourage new businesses to the area and opportunities to make St Margarets more of an attraction to visitors to the area.

We have proposed to the council that we create a small commercial zone within the shopping areas of Crown Road and St Margarets Road. We propose that the SMTA hold a licence to organise and control commercial activities such as market stalls and various promotional activities. Initially the wide pavement space outside Armstrong's butchers could be used. We would rent this space to businesses. We already have several traders, including a fishmonger, that are interested in using this space.

We have asked that the St Margarets Traders Association hold the licence for commercial activity within the commercial zone to carefully select that businesses using the area are beneficial to St Margarets, like a fishmonger would be and ensure that the businesses were attractively presented, followed any guidelines laid down and were responsible and compliant regarding refuse removal.

The traders association is also keen to use the licence to promote/create other activities in the area including antique fairs and arts fairs giving local artists the opportunity to showcase their work.

Any income created from the commercial zone will be used to directly benefit St Margarets. The funds will be used to improve the street scene in the area by helping to fund hanging baskets and floral displays and would help to fund the centrepiece Christmas tree. Currently Richmond Council makes a contribution towards Christmas trees and hanging baskets but as council funds become less available it seems only right that we look for alternative sources of funding.

So far we have had an enthusiastic response from the council concerning our commercial zone initiative and although the council is keen to explore new ideas and help traders associations across the borough the councils licencing department are concerned that recent European legislation under the EU Services Directive might make it difficult for a licence to be granted. One of the opening statements from the directive states 'The Directive creates significant new opportunities for UK businesses'. Further clarification is being sought about how the directive should be interpreted by local councils. We hope that the council will be able to work with us to achieve our commercial zone initiative and support our plans for the local area.

Local Comments:

Darren Armstrong from Armstrong's butchers said *'The commercial zone idea and the new businesses this would bring to the area would have a positive impact on St Margarets and would become a major attraction to the area.'*

Michael Peacock from Chase Buchanan estate agents said *'This can only further enhance the unique charm and appeal that makes St Margarets the place where everybody wants to live.'*

Local resident **Linda Evans** adds *'This is a creative way of supporting our local government so they in turn can support us.'*

Councillor **Pamela Fleming** Strategic Cabinet Member for Community, Business and Culture comments *"St Margarets is a shining example of a successful shopping area with a wide range of attractive shops and cafes that local people enjoy using. The Traders' Association carefully researches the market and a commercial zone is an innovative idea that would give the business community more autonomy and the chance to expand activities and increase footfall. Residents would of course have to be consulted and the new European directive does make licensing the highway more complicated, but Cllr. Chris Harrison, the new Cabinet member for Highways and Streetscene and I will be working with Officers to try to find ways of taking this idea forward."*

Susan Fitz-Gibbon of Fitz-Gibbon Letting Agency said *'St.Margarets has an excellent community and creating a commercial zone would be a positive move for the "village".'*

An artists impression of one of the market stalls by local artist Nancy Petley-Jones.



Parking

Parking availability is key to businesses and residents alike, we welcome the councils new half hour free parking scheme for residents and would like the scheme to be extended to include visitors to the area. The association is working with the council to review a number of parking issues in the area with a view to increasing the number of parking bays, reviewing the usage of bays and improving the clarity of signage.



Traders in the community

The traders association holds two community fairs per year, one in the summer as part of the Twickenham Festival and the other at Christmas. The fairs are a celebration of our community and offer the opportunity for local charities and schools to raise awareness and funds.



We have now published five editions of the My St Margarets Magazine and there are many more editions to come, the magazine showcases St Margarets and are a platform for local writers, artists and schools to show their works. The magazine is now available online at the trader's website www.mystmargarets.com.

The St Margarets Traders Association represents 70 local independent traders who support the area in many ways including sponsorship of many local schools and clubs activities and events. We organise the areas festive trees and lighting and we work with Richmond in Bloom to provide hanging baskets.

There are now over 2000 proud owners of the St Margarets shopper - not only in St Margarets but all over the world, we have despatched the bags to ex-pats now living in Australia, New Zealand, The states and The Far East.



Many of these initiatives were made possible through the support the traders association receives from the councils Economic Development department whose support for our association has undoubtedly helped St Margarets to prosper.

Thank you for taking to the time to read about our plan, if you would like any further information or would like to comment on any of our initiatives please do not hesitate to contact the St Margarets Traders Association at traders@mystmargarets.com.

Perhaps one final thought.....

When you are next shopping in St Margarets whether is for a newspaper or tonight's dinner, or if you are choosing a coffee shop or a hairdresser or even looking for a property agent - please choose one with a heart! You'll find the St Margarets heart logo on a variety of local businesses and by choosing a business with our heart logo you'll know that you are supporting a business that is supporting St Margarets.

