Mark meets with Market Traders

MP Mark Lancaster met over 100 traders from MK Market Â to hear their concerns about proposals to build over their home of 30 years in Market Square, Secklow Gate for the proposed Primark development.

Traders said they had been shocked to find out that the centre:mk proposed moving them to a small, "third-rate" site near McDonalds. "Either four out of ten stalls would disappear or every trader would have to cut their business by 40%. Either way, it would be the end of the market," said spokesman Chris Lee.

Since the Portas Review, the government has encouraged investment in markets as a way of revitalising the High Street and has even appointed a Markets Minister, Mark Prisk. However the National Market Traders Federation is warning that over 400 jobs are at risk in Milton Keynes if the traders are forced to leave Market Square.

Mr Lancaster assured the gathering "I'm committed to a long-term, viable market in Milton Keynes." While explaining that he does not get involved with individual planning applications he expressed concern with the current lack of strategic vision, adding "I'm concerned that a whole series of bit-piece applications are coming in that are not in the broad plan or interests of Milton Keynes."

Mr Lancaster promised to look into the matter, and encouraged traders to think about opportunities as well as threats. Mark plans to raise this with the Chief Executive of the Council in the upcoming week.

Later, Gary Eaton, who runs The Phone Doctor stall, said "We're very pleased that Mr Lancaster has promised to look into our case. After all the market is the last bastion of small, independent retailers and makes CMK different from every other shopping centre. We think there's loads of potential, but first we have to win this David and Goliath battle. Our livelihoods are at stake and we won't know if we have a future or not until the night of the Development Control Committee. The uncertainty is bad for business and awful for our families too."

Regarding the significance of Market Square Mr Eaton explained:"The market succeeds because of where it is. We don't see why the centre:mk should be allowed to ruin our livelihoods and get rid of a thriving, multi-cultural hub when they could easily afford to build Primark over the road on already vacant land. Historically, markets that have been moved have not survived and we are not going to let this happen to MK Market."