

# Supermarket *sweep*



With the imminent arrival of a Waitrose in Chiswick, are locals pleased about another supermarket on the High Road? **EMILY HOPE** finds out

So Woolworths has finally disappeared from Chiswick High Road without so much as a by your leave, and Waitrose is set to replace it before the year is out.

But before it takes its stand the store is undergoing a major refurbishment, including ensuring its electricity is from renewable energy sources. It will then reopen in December in a blaze of speciality foods, deli counters and ethically sourced produce.

While it's still too early to say exactly what will be in the shop, a spokesman says, "It will have everything you've come to expect from a Waitrose food shop, offering a wide range of quality fresh foods and groceries, an award-winning wine collection, specialist meat, fish and cheese counters and a delicatessen."

News of its arrival has generally been met with eager anticipation. Local teacher Joseph Goldsmith welcomes the move. "Whenever I'm planning a dinner party, I always find Waitrose has every single ingredient, and I know it's of the best quality. Sainsbury's and Tesco have a lot of volume but not necessarily everything I want," he says. "I also find the staff in Waitrose are often more knowledgeable and helpful than the average supermarket worker."

But do we really need another supermarket in Chiswick? Surely two Sainsbury's, a Tesco, Costcutter, Spar, Marks & Spencer and

As Nature Intended are enough?

Not so, according to Mark Price, managing director of Waitrose. He told *The Green*, "We are delighted to add this prime location to our portfolio of shops, particularly as it is sited in our heartland area where Londoners have been requesting a Waitrose branch for many years."

While there's certainly excitement about the quality of produce that will be available, and the competition it'll bring for the frequently criticised Sainsbury's, there is also concern that the closure of Woolies is a real loss to the neighbourhood.

New mum, Felicity Winchester admits, "Once upon a time I'd have loved a Waitrose on Chiswick High Road and would have happily sacrificed Woolworths. But when I had a baby I really missed Woolworths. I suppose it could have been worse; it could have been another Tesco or Starbucks or mobile phone store. But it definitely could have been better – a Ping Pong, Wagamama or an H&M would have been more to my taste!"

It's the departure of Woolworths rather than the arrival of Waitrose which is causing a stir with other local residents. Lucy Sampson comments, "Woolworths was a bit of reality on an increasingly chi-chi street."

But what do the local independents think? Are they feeling threatened by Waitrose





arrival? Or do they feel there's enough room for everyone?

Ann-Marie Stockwell, from the fruit and veg stall by Dukes Avenue, admits they had been worried when they first heard the news, fearing it would adversely affect their trade. But talking to her customers she is now feeling more positive.

"Customers already choose to come here over the supermarkets, because of the quality and price; even more so now with the state of the economy."

The independent shops on Turnham Green Terrace were more bullish.

Dan Mortimer, owner of Mortimer & Bennett says, "We're delighted that Waitrose is joining us in Chiswick and hope they're up to the competition. We'll definitely give them a run for their money."

On a more serious note, he adds, "It won't make a difference to us as we've built up loyal customers over the years. They will never be able to compete with us on cheese and meat products because they simply can't source the things we can from independent suppliers, due to their price points.

"Hopefully it'll keep Sainsbury's on its toes and may even force them to pull their socks up. They've been frustrating locals for years, although I'm sure the Sainsbury's car park will now be even more in demand," he concludes.

Phil Diamond, senior partner at Covent Garden Fishmongers, admits he remains confident about his business. "I shouldn't think it'll affect us at all. A lot of people want something better than your average supermarket. More people will use it than they did Woolworths and I really can't see it doing us any harm."

From a meat point of view, Damien at Mackens Bros butchers says, "We just have a totally different quality of meat. Waitrose and other supermarkets are convenient for mums and people who don't have time to queue up. But if you want a particular cut or beef that's hung and aged properly, there's just no contest. People who know what they want will still come here."

Sainsbury's were keeping their cards close to their chest when questioned. Responding to hopes that Waitrose's arrival would force Sainsbury's to up its game, a spokeswoman says, "We will continue to look at ways to improve our offer."

And on the issue of parking, which has been raised by locals as being potentially open to abuse by those wishing to shop at Waitrose, yet park in the Sainsbury's car park, she adds, "We provide our customers



Londoners have been requesting a Waitrose branch here for many years

with free parking for added convenience, which we monitor to ensure that it is used by Sainsbury's shoppers."

But it seems that while admittedly, there are a lot of supermarkets on our High Road, this is not just any supermarket joining the ranks. Waitrose, it appears, is the only one that could be added which will be welcomed. It fills a hole which, as its spokeswoman says, "Will enable the people in Chiswick to enjoy sharing our passion for good food." ●