

To the attention of the A board licensing committee

I write this letter in support of my application for an A board outside Snappy Snaps at 210 High Street in Cheltenham. This board has been a boon to our business during the lean years, and it is no exaggeration to say that it will possibly be the saviour of it during the coming ones. The whole neighbourhood is being redeveloped, by that I mean the extension of the Brewery, which entails the closing of the Tesco Metro (see Photo) and the subsequent loss of an enormous part of the footfall in this part of the High Street. I am keen to share with you the following percentage figures for our shop, as well as putting them into context. Those figures can be checked with the owner of our franchise, the Timpson group of key-cutting fame.

In 2012, our turnover was down by 13.2% on the previous calendar year. In January 2013, I phoned the council to apply for permission to display an A board, and was told that I could apply if I wished, but I was unlikely to be successful since the policy did not allow shops with street frontage to display a board. The cost of the application was a factor in me not engaging into what I understood would be a futile exercise. I have had very positive results when I had displayed a board in some of my other shops, namely the Snappy Snaps in Hampstead, north London, and the Oxford Cornmarket Street branch. The sales of the advertised service ALWAYS rose when a board was displayed, so in despair at a situation where the Cheltenham shop was threatening to become non-viable, I decided to test the waters and display a board. The results were staggering:

Our 2013 turnover, when numerous other shops were going out of business, was up by 19.3%, with passport photo sales, one of our most profitable products and the service advertised on the board, rose by considerably more.

Our 2014 sales were up by a further 8.5%, still bucking the high street downward sales trend, and that DESPITE the upheaval of phase 1 of the Brewery development. Passport photo sales were even stronger.

2015 sales started strong, with January up by 7.6 % compared to January 2014. By then I was being requested to take the board in by the council, and for the following 5 months, the board was only intermittently put out. The figures speak for themselves: sales till were down by 4.3%, flat, 10.1%, 2.9% and 3.8% for the following months. In July, I decided to leave the board out for a further confirmatory test, and sales went UP by 2.6% .

I do not believe that a loosening of the policy to restrict A-boards will result in a forest of dangerous and unregulated safety hazards. To name just 2 of the prettiest towns in England where such a draconian policy does not exist, Warwick and Oxford, it is plain that a simplified set of guidelines will suffice. I have done considerable research into major towns and cities' policies, and it seems that the vast majority relies on a common sense approach, and Section 137 of the Highways Act 1980 is deliberately not enforced.

I am now in despair at seeing my sales go down further, especially since we are at present surrounded by development work at the Patisserie Valerie building which has all but obscured us from view (see photo), and is due to continue till well into 2016. We are also looking at phase 2 of the brewery development which will take place imminently and will close down ALL the shops on the north side of the High Street for a considerable length of time. Our site was due a complete shop

refit in early 2016, and I am worried that a dramatic fall in sales will leave me unable to complete that task. My lease ends in 2018, and I am keen to extend it and continue trading on the site.

As a last word, please note that our board, if authorized, will be tucked right against our building in what is a 50ft wide pedestrianized street. None of our boards in any of our shops have ever caused an obstruction, and I would not be displaying it if it did, and if I did not strongly believe it was essential to the survival of what is a marginally profitable business. Please also note that we have demonstrated a reasonable longevity (12 years and counting) on a site which had previously seen 2 tenants in 5 years. I wish for that to continue for many more years, and am counting on your support in the matter.

Sincerely,

Raja Beirouti

Franchisee

Snappy Snaps Cheltenham

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Photo Glossary:

1. The A-Board.
2. Tesco Metro closed down, building demolition to start soon.
3. Scaffolding to our right (Paparrito's).
4. Scaffolding to our left, Patisserie Valerie (very intrusive).
5. Scaffolding to our left, alternative view.
6. More misery.