

New Shopping Centre for Danbury

“It’s not going to be good for business in the town centre. We’re struggling as it is.”

This was the response of Alice Adams, owner of Fantastic Flowers in the market place following the news late last night that planning permission has been given for a new shopping centre just off the Danbury ring road.

“People just don’t have money to spend, and if they start to go to this new centre, where they don’t have to pay to park and where everything they want is under one roof, then the town centre will just die”, added Alice, whose family have run the flower shop for the last thirty years.

Bob James, who was buying an anniversary present for his wife when our reporter, Tim Smith, dropped in to the shop to get Alice’s reaction to the news, isn’t so pessimistic.

“I think customers are loyal to the local shops. We get good service, there are lots of buses, and the place has character. In these shopping centres you could be anywhere. They are all the same.”

Ann Bradshaw, who has worked for Alice for five years, joins in the conversation as she wraps the roses Bob has bought.

“One problem is the parking here. There isn’t enough of it. Another is that since the big supermarket arrived, about four years ago now, a few of the shops in town have closed. We have no butcher’s or greengrocer’s. We used to have three baker’s shops and now there is just the one. Our business isn’t as good as it once was. People come here for special occasions but for a bunch of flowers or a plant to brighten up the living room, they go to the supermarket.”

So there are mixed feelings in Danbury. But the project will go ahead and the centre is expected to open for business in time for the run up to Christmas next year. Exactly which shops, and how many, will be opening there has not been revealed yet. As they left the meeting last night, town planners were confident that the new centre will not take away trade from the town, but that it will bring job opportunities to the area.