



Maxine James

The council is aware, too, of increased shop rents, but insists that they have risen as a direct result of the property boom that affected all areas of the capital. It is putting its faith in the knock-on effect: as more shoppers are attracted to multiple stores they will spend their money in the smaller ethnic shops too.

An entertainment infrastructure has been there for a while. The Ritzy Cinema, The Fridge

club, The Academy, The Brixton Village in St Matthews Meeting Place and splendid shopping arcades are all major attractions for Brixton.

Since Atlantic Estates bought the Granville Arcade and Market Row, the ethnic retail centre of Brixton, many of the traders there fear a strategy of increased rent and worry that talk of renovating the splendid art deco arcades will drive them out of business.

Carol Reid is a spokesperson for the Granville Traders Association that was formed a year ago to protect the interests of the market traders. She says that the association's 200 members are broadly in favour of all modernisation and redevelopment plans that will improve facilities.

"We are a part of Brixton," she says. "Brixton does need cleaning and tidying up. It needs to be developed, but we want to be a part of it when it happens. All of us are going through hell at that market. Nobody knows what is happening or if they will have a business next year."

It is their future that concerns most of the traders, not the stylish gentrification taking place in other parts of the area. Mavis has managed the Wig Bazaar in Granville Arcade for 27 years and as far as she is concerned the new restaurants and the arrival of multiple stores have had no effect on the quality of her life. "Maybe the people in north London will want to come to

Brixton for an evening out," she says wryly.

It is Maxine James' job to understand how big business works. She runs Equinox Associates and has closely monitored the changes in the area since she moved her company to premises on Brixton Road in 1985.

"What is happening now is that with the movement in of what you could call yuppie residents bigger firms have recognised that Brixton is not just a place where black and poor people live, and some of the people who have moved in provide a viable market for their goods and services.

"Entrepreneurial Brixton has always been there and that is what is annoying about the changes taking place. What will happen is the business people who struggled, who made low sales, are not going to be the people to capitalise on this development and regeneration. Rents will be forced up so they will be forced out." ■

Jonathan Futrell

TIMES:

4 - 8 AM

12 - 4 pm

8 - Midnight

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