

THE RURAL SHOPS ALLIANCE

6 June 2006

By e-mail to:

T J Oyler
Competition Commission
Victoria House
Southampton Row
London
WC1B 4AD

Dear Mr Oyler

MARKET INVESTIGATION: THE SUPPLY OF GROCERIES BY RETAILERS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

The Rural Shops Alliance (RSA) has provided the Office of Fair Trading with a submission setting out its support for a referral – a hard copy of that document will be sent to you under separate cover. The RSA is happy for its views to be published.

The RSA works on behalf of some 7,400 independent rural retailers across England and many of these retailers are at the point of extinction as a result of the monopolistic hold the superstores have over the whole supply of goods and services to the UK public. The potential loss of the village store will be devastating in financial terms to the families that run them and in social terms to the communities they serve.

The RSA believes that there is but one ‘grocery’ market and that consumers demands are and should continue to be met by diversity of retail outlets – very much including small stores.

The RSA would like to see the scope of the investigation widened to include newspapers and magazines and also tobacco and tobacco products. These products represent a significant proportion of rural shops turnover and importantly help drive footfall, the superstore influence over these products distorts trade.

The RSA represents a number of rural forecourts and believes that the supply of petrol should also be included in the investigation as superstores very much distort the retail price of fuels.

It is difficult for the RSA to measure the exact effect on its retail members of the superstores aggressive planning, buying and selling policies but trust the Competition Commission will hear our views. We are keen to meet with you and to further inform your investigation.

If you would like further information please contact me on 07946 302824 or e-mail: sean.carter@rural-shops-alliance.co.uk or Adrian Boorman an independent rural

forecourt retailer who chairs the RSA Public Affairs Group on 01865 891251 or
email: summitstad@aol.com

Yours sincerely

e-signed

Sean Carter
Chief executive