

8.0 Shopping

Introduction

- 8.1 Guildford Town Centre together with the Borough's district centres, local centres, neighbourhood shops and out-of-centre shopping provision, cater for the shopping needs of the Borough's population.
- 8.2 Guildford Town Centre is the principal shopping centre in Surrey and provides the focus of retail activity in the Borough with a wide range of shops including major multiple stores and small specialist retailers. The Centre also has an attractive historic environment and many other supporting leisure and cultural activities that add to its character and vitality.
- 8.3 In recent years considerable improvements have been made to the Town Centre. These include physical improvements such as the ongoing scheme of environmental enhancements, increased accessibility (with improvements to car parks) and the introduction of park and ride and Shopmobility, and also safety through the introduction of CCTV.
- 8.4 This Plan aims primarily to protect the vitality and viability of existing shopping and related facilities throughout the Borough. In doing so it aims to allow limited additional provision of retail floorspace that meets the needs of the Borough's residents. This provision is expected to be in Guildford Town Centre and district and local centres rather than in out-of-centre developments.
- 8.5 This Chapter covers all the shopping uses identified as Class A in the 1995 Use Classes Order. This includes shops (Class A1), financial and professional services (Class A2) and food and drink uses (Class A3). While the General Permitted Development Order 1995 allows some flexibility for changes of use within and between these classes, the balance between these different uses is an important issue which can affect the attractiveness of shopping centres.

Planning Policy Guidance and the 1994 Surrey Structure Plan

- 8.6 Planning Policy Guidance Note 6, *Town Centres and Retail Developments*, emphasises the sequential approach in making assessments of major retail development proposals whereby first preference for development proposals should be for Town Centre sites. The four key tests for assessments of new development are: the sequential test; the impact on the vitality and viability of town centres, accessibility by a choice of means of transport and impact on overall travel and car use.
- 8.7 The 1994 Surrey Structure Plan retail policies allow limited additional provision of retail floorspace that meets the needs of Surrey residents. Policy DP15 sets out criteria for the provision of such floorspace, which is expected to be primarily located in existing town centres. Policy DP16 states that proposals for retail provision outside existing town centres will only be allowed where a suitable Town Centre or edge of centre location cannot be found. Policy DP17 places emphasis on maintaining and enhancing the character of town centres.

Existing Retail Floorspace

- 8.8 In 1996 Surrey County Council produced a *Survey of Town Centres & Out of Centre Shops; TR2/96*. This technical report gives retail floorspace data of the strategic shopping centres in Surrey and compares it with the results of previous similar surveys. Guildford Town Centre, the sole centre with Group 1 status, is shown to have the highest comparison net floorspace of any Surrey town, with a total figure of approximately 62,000 square metres. This is over 50% more comparison floorspace than the next largest town centre in Surrey. Similarly, Guildford Town Centre has in the region of 500 individual shopping units with other towns in Surrey having no more than 200. Within these 500 units, over 100 multiple retailers are represented in the Town Centre, again comparing favourably with other towns in the county.

- 8.9 New trends in retailing associated with large bulky goods have been accommodated over the last decade at Ladymead retail warehouse park, where unit sizes vary between 700 square metres and 3,500 square metres.
- 8.10 Two food based superstores operate in Guildford Urban Area, one on the western side of the town and one on the east. Both have over 3,000 square metres of sales area. There are several important district and local shopping centres across the Borough which have been identified in this Plan. These centres play an important role in the provision of shops and related services to local people and particularly those without access to a car.

Additional Provision & Future Trends

- 8.11 Planning permission was granted in 1997 for a major redevelopment of the area bounded by the rear of properties in North Street, Commercial Road and Leapale Road as shown on the Proposal Map (see figure 9.1). A revised application was submitted in 2001 to provide 25,000sqm of net total retail floorspace. This was refused by the Borough Council in 2002.
- 8.12 In April 1997 the Borough Council prepared Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG - *Change of Use in Guildford Town Centre*) advising applicants on the approach taken on applications for changes of use in Guildford Town Centre. The policies contained in this SPG have been carried forward into this Plan. Another trend that has emerged recently is the amalgamation of small Town Centre units to form larger retail units. The concern associated with this emerging trend centres around the loss of small retail units, most suited to specialist and independent traders, in locations where they benefit from footfall generated by the large multiples. Planning permission is not normally required to amalgamate retail units, but the Borough Council will encourage the provision of small units in association with retail development and redevelopment, where appropriate.

Objectives

- 8.13 The objectives of the Policies in this Chapter are:
1. To achieve adequate provision for the retailing needs of all sectors of the Borough's community.
 2. To maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of Guildford Town Centre.
 3. To protect the viability of district centres and local shops in order to meet the needs of local communities.
 4. To provide retail facilities which are accessible to the majority of the population without increasing the need for car trips.
 5. To retain a range of shop sizes within the Town Centre.

Supporting Measures

- 8.14 The above objectives will be achieved through the implementation of the policies and proposals set out in this Plan and by the following supporting measures:
1. Village Shop Rate Relief - Funded jointly by Central Government and the Borough Council, the scheme aims to protect local services in rural settlements and can grant business rate relief for Post Offices, general stores and other shops that are of benefit to the local community.
 2. Town Centre Management - In conjunction with Guildford Business Forum, the Borough Council part fund a Town Centre Manager. A Town Centre Action Plan has been prepared.
 3. Western Wards Action Plan - This initiative is an action based project specifically for the areas of Ash, Ash Vale, Tongham and Ash Green. This Action Plan has identified some Shopping Action Points that are intended to support retail facilities in the area.

4. Environmental Improvements - The Borough Council operates a successful environmental improvement programme aimed at improving the environmental quality of local areas. This includes improvement works to local shopping parades across the Borough.

New Retail Development

**Policy S1
MAJOR NEW RETAIL DEVELOPMENT**

Major new retail development will be expected to satisfy the following criteria:

1. The sequential approach has been applied whereby first preference will be given to Town Centre sites, then edge of centre sites, followed by district and local centres, and only then out of centre sites in locations which are accessible by a choice of means of transport;
2. There is no detrimental impact, either individually or cumulatively, on the vitality and viability of existing centres.
3. A clear need has been demonstrated for edge of centre or out of centre sites.

8.15 The Council will keep under review, through the monitoring of developments, including permissions not yet implemented, and if necessary surveys, the requirement for further major shopping development. This Council considers that with the granting of permission for development of land bounded by North Street, Friary Centre/Commercial Road and Leapale Road (application number 95/P/01539, decision date 20/05/98), there is no overriding need for further major retail development in the Borough during the Plan period. However the Council will keep under review the requirement for further major retail developments. Guildford already has considerable retail warehousing which is of good quality and provides a wide range of goods for local shoppers. It is considered that existing facilities are adequate and well placed to meet local needs. If any major retail

development applications are made in the Plan period, they will be assessed using the above criteria. Development providing more than 2,500 square metres gross of additional retail floorspace is considered 'major retail development'.

8.16 Adopting a sequential approach means that first preference should be for Town Centre sites, where suitable sites or buildings suitable for conversion are available, followed by edge-of-centre sites, district and local centres and only then out-of-centre sites in locations that are accessible by a choice of means of transport. In considering need in relation to edge of centre or out of centre sites, depending on the circumstances, the Council will have regard to the following:

1. the type and scale of retail provision proposed;
2. the objectives of sustainability in retail provision and traffic generation;
3. the regeneration of underused brownfield land;
4. the capacity in physical terms or demand in terms of available expenditure within the proposals catchment area;
5. and other relevant considerations.

8.17 In addition, any new retail development will be expected to meet the requirements of the design code Policy G5.

**Policy S2
ADDITIONAL RETAIL DEVELOPMENT
IN GUILDFORD TOWN CENTRE**

Planning permission will be granted for retail development in Guildford town centre where no more than 2,500 sqm of additional gross floor area is provided.

Developments over 2,500 sqm will only be approved if they satisfy the criteria of Policy S1 and other policies within the Plan.

- 8.18 The vitality and viability of Guildford Town Centre is dependant on retaining and developing a wide range of attractions and amenities, creating and maintaining an attractive environment, ensuring good accessibility to and within the centre and attracting continuing investment in development and refurbishment of existing buildings. Therefore, whilst it is recognised that a significant commitment has already been made with respect to the St Dominic Square permission, the Town Centre remains the most appropriate location for proposals involving small scale increases in retail floorspace whether by new development or change of use.
- 8.19 Any proposals will be assessed against relevant polices including the design code and historic environment policies. Development involving a net loss of residential accommodation will not be permitted.

**Policy S3
PROVISION OF SMALL RETAIL
UNITS (CLASS A1)**

Allowances should be made for the provision of new and the retention of existing small units on major retail developments, including redevelopment in Guildford Town Centre.

- 8.20 Small retail units, typically no larger than 100 square metres, play an important role in the character of Guildford's Town Centre. As they are most commonly located along the connecting streets running off the High Street, they provide the opportunity for independent traders to benefit from central location and footfall generated by the larger retail multiples. There has been a recent trend in combining these small units with adjoining properties to form larger retail units. Whilst there may be no change of use, and hence no planning control, associated with such proposals, it is felt that the character of the Town Centre may suffer if small units were lost.

Identified Shopping Areas

**Policy S4
GUILDFORD TOWN CENTRE
PRIMARY SHOPPING AREA**

Within the prime shopping area as defined on the Proposals Map, proposals for the change of use of existing shops (Class A1) to other uses will not be permitted.

- 8.21 The High Street remains the retail core of Guildford Town Centre. The Plan defines a prime shopping area along the High Street where a concentration of the retail multiples are represented. This prime area is characterised by the highest proportion of A1 (shop) uses, the highest Zone A rental values, and predominantly the highest pedestrian flow levels in Surrey. In order to protect the vitality and viability of this prime shopping area and the Town Centre as a whole, the change of use from A1 (shops) to other uses within the Prime Shopping Area will not be permitted. Giving part of the High Street such strong policy protection against encroachment by non shopping (A1) uses enables adjacent streets more opportunity to accommodate complementary retail based uses.

**Policy S5
GUILDFORD TOWN CENTRE
SECONDARY SHOPPING AREAS**

Within the secondary shopping areas of Guildford Town Centre, as defined on the Proposals Map, planning permission for the change of use from shops (Class A1) to financial and professional services (Class A2) and food and drink premises (Class A3) will be permitted where all the following criteria are met:

1. The additional use results in no more than two permitted non-retail uses adjacent to each other;

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2. The additional use results in no more than a guideline figure of one third of the sum total of the defined street level frontage (as defined in Appendix 2) in permitted non-Class A1 use;
3. The use does not result in loss of amenity in terms of noise, disturbance, smell, litter or traffic generation; and
4. The proposed use will not be detrimental to the shopping pattern or character of the Town Centre.

Exceptionally loss of shopping area uses (Class A) at ground floor level will be permitted where the replacement uses are appropriate to a shopping frontage.

8.22 The diversity of uses in town centres makes an important contribution to their vitality and viability. A more flexible policy approach is required to foster this diversity in the streets surrounding the prime shopping area. While these streets (see Appendix 2) perform an important shopping function within the Town Centre, their rental levels and footfall are at such a level to offer opportunity to a wider range of shopping uses. However, it is important to strike the correct balance between shops (A1) and other retail based uses (A2 & A3). PPG6 highlights the issue of changes of use causing new concentrations of uses, such as restaurants and take away food outlets, where the cumulative effects can cause local problems. The amenity of residents in the Town Centre will also be protected. The environs of Abbot's Hospital in particular is an area where further changes of use to Class A3 uses will be regarded in the light of the need to safeguard residential amenity. While such changes of use can add to the vitality of an area, the loss of retail, increased traffic generation and other issues of local amenity, particularly to Town Centre residents, must be considered in such applications.

**Policy S6
GUILDFORD TOWN CENTRE
TERTIARY SHOPPING AREAS**

Within the tertiary shopping areas of Guildford Town Centre, as defined on the proposals map, planning permission for the change of use from shops (Class A1) to financial and professional services (Class A2) and food and drink premises (Class A3) will be permitted where all the following criteria are met:

1. The additional use results in no more than three permitted non-retail uses adjacent to each other;
2. The additional use results in no more than a guideline figure of two thirds of the identified ground floor tertiary frontage (as defined in Appendix 2) in permitted non-Class A1 uses;
3. The use does not result in loss of amenity in terms of noise, disturbance, smell, litter or traffic generation, and
4. The proposal does not result in a continuous non-Class A1 frontage exceeding 20 metres

Exceptionally loss of shopping area uses (Class A) at ground floor level will be permitted where replacement uses are appropriate to a shopping frontage.

8.23 It is considered that there are a number of streets in the Town Centre where there could be greater flexibility of uses permitted without harm to shopping character, vitality and viability. These streets, while not part of the core shopping area, provide a range of uses that are a vital part of the functioning of the Town Centre. In this regard it is important to retain a proportion of retail (Class A1) uses in these tertiary areas (see Appendix 2) to ensure some level of activity during the day while providing the flexibility that enables the location of other complimentary uses. These tertiary shopping streets also provide important pedestrian links to and from the more

centrally located shopping areas within the Town Centre and the surrounding residential areas.

**Policy S7
GUILDFORD TOWN CENTRE
SPECIALIST SHOPPING AREAS**

Within the specialist shopping areas as defined on the Proposals Map, applications for changes of use to food and drink uses (Class A3) will be permitted provided that the proposed use does not result in the loss of amenity in terms of noise, disturbance, smell, litter or traffic generation. Applications for the change of use to financial and professional services (Class A2) will not be permitted.

Exceptionally loss of shopping area uses (Class A) will be permitted where replacement uses are appropriate to a shopping frontage.

- 8.24 Within these more peripheral areas (see Appendix 2), it is appropriate to permit a higher proportion of food and drink (Class A3) uses. These uses play an important role, collectively and individually, in enhancing the Town Centre's evening economy. In recognising the benefits such uses can play, the Borough Council will adopt a more positive approach to the provision of food and drink uses, within the specialist shopping areas.

**Policy S8
DISTRICT SHOPPING CENTRES**

The following District Shopping Centres have been identified and are shown on the Proposals Map:

1. Station Parade, East Horsley
2. Wharf Road, Ash

Within District Shopping Centres planning permission will be granted for limited increases in shopping (Class A1) floorspace where they are consistent with the scale and function of the district centre as a whole.

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Planning permission for the change of use from shops (Class A1) to financial and professional services (Class A2) and/or food and drink (Class A3) will only be permitted if the following criteria are met:

1. The proposal results in no more than two permitted non-retail uses adjacent to each other;
2. The proposal results in no more than a guideline figure of one-third of the sum total defined street level frontage in permitted non-retail uses;
3. The proposal will not result in loss of amenity in terms of noise, smell, litter or traffic generation;
4. The proposal will not prejudice the character and appearance of the district centre and its immediate environment.

Exceptionally loss of shopping area uses (Class A) at ground level will be permitted where the replacement uses are appropriate to a shopping frontage.

- 8.25 District Shopping Centres are defined as groups of shops, separate from town centres, usually containing at least one food supermarket and non-retail services such as banks, building societies and restaurants. The criteria for the designation of a District Shopping Centre are as follows (all must be met):

1. A concentration of local services within the Settlement Area (rural area) or the Urban Area;
2. Cumulatively a sum total of 30 or over retail and non-retail units;
3. The presence of a large food shop/supermarket and/or non-retail services, such as banks and/or building societies;
4. Accessible by means other than the private car - i.e. served by public transport.

Policy S9

LOCAL SHOPPING CENTRES

Local Shopping Centres are identified as follows, as shown on the Proposals Map: Aldershot Road, Westborough; Ash Vale Parade; Collingwood Crescent, Boxgrove; London Road, Burpham (Kingpost Parade); Epsom Road, Merrow; Kingfisher Drive, Merrow; Madrid Road, Guildford Park; Southway, Park Barn; Stoughton Road, Bellfields; The Square, Onslow Village; Woodbridge Hill, Guildford; Woodbridge Road, Guildford; Manor Road, Stoughton; Worplesdon Road, Stoughton; Bishopsmead Parade, East Horsley; Effingham; Fairlands; Ripley; Send; Shalford; Shere; The Street, Tongham.

Within Local Shopping Centres planning permission for increases in retail floorspace will be granted where they are consistent with the scale and function of the local centre.

Proposals involving the change of use of a shop (Class A1) to use for financial and professional services (Class A2) and/or food and drink (Class A3) will only be permitted where the following criteria have been met:

1. The proposal will not result in a concentration of such uses that would be harmful to the Local Shopping Centre's vitality and viability;
2. The proposal will not result in loss of amenity in terms of noise, smell, litter or traffic generation;
3. The proposal will not prejudice the character and appearance of the local centre and its immediate environment.

Exceptionally loss of shopping area uses (Class A) at ground floor level will be permitted where the replacement uses are themselves appropriate to a shopping frontage.

- 8.26 They play a vital role in the functioning of sustainable environments, providing essential convenience retail needs and forming focal points for local people who may not have access to private forms of transport. District Centres also provide a range of non-retail services such as estate agents, banks, restaurants and libraries. Thus they are suitable locations for new retail developments such as medium sized food stores meeting local needs or small-scale developments of unit shops. Any proposed development should relate well to the existing centre, both in terms of size and function. Limited increases in retail floorspace relate to the total floorspace of the centre as a whole rather than to individual units. This will help to secure their vitality and viability without threatening that of neighbouring retail services.
- 8.27 Whilst it is recognised that East Horsley is located within the Green Belt, a positive approach to shopping provision is taken in District Shopping Centres in order to maintain and enhance their role in retail and related service provision to the residents of the area and reduce their need to travel. East Horsley is also served by a railway station and has a range of convenience shopping facilities, banks and a local library. The western wards of Ash, Tongham and Ash Vale have a combined population of approximately 17,500 people. These wards are served by three railway stations. It is recognised that Ash Wharf District Centre has no bank or building society, uses associated with such District Centres, but the Borough Council is actively seeking to address this deficiency.
- 8.28 In considering proposals for the change of use from a shop (Class A1) to other retail based uses (Class A2 & A3), account will be taken of the frontage width of the shop, the prominence of the unit in the District Centre and the extent of clustering of non-shop (Class A1) uses that would result.

8.29 Local Shopping Centres are defined as small groups of shops usually comprising a newsagent, a general store, a sub-post office and other small shops of a local nature. The criteria for the designation of a Local Shopping Centre are as follows:

1. A concentration of local services within the Settlement Area (rural area) or the Urban Area.
2. Must be either:
 - at least five adjoining/neighbouring retail units (Class A), or
 - a concentration of retail units located in close proximity to other community facilities such as clinics, doctors etc reinforcing the local centre's local function, or
 - an area with cumulatively over 10 retail units (Class A) in close proximity.

8.30 Such local centres perform an important local function in meeting the everyday convenience shopping needs of urban residential areas and rural communities. The number of suburban and local shops has declined in recent years. In this context and in recognition of their valuable local function, existing convenience shopping facilities should be retained wherever possible.

8.31 In considering proposals for the change of use from a shop (Class A1) to other retail based uses (Class A2 & A3) account will be taken of the frontage width of the shop and the extent of clustering of non-shop (Class A1) uses that would result.

8.32 The Borough Council operates an ongoing programme of Environmental Improvements. Some Local Shopping Centres may benefit from such environmental works that might include rationalising parking provision, improving signage and enhancing landscaping.

Other Shopping Policies

Policy S10 NEIGHBOURHOOD SHOPS

Outside the identified shopping centres but within the urban area or the settlement boundaries permission will be granted for small scale individual shops and shop extensions providing for the daily shopping needs of the local community, subject to other policies of the Plan.

The change of use of neighbourhood shops (Class A1) will only be permitted where the following criteria are met:

1. It can be demonstrated that the retention of the use has been explored without success;
2. The proposal will not prejudice the character and appearance of the immediate environment;
3. The proposal will not result in loss of amenity in terms of noise, smell, litter or traffic generation.

8.33 Neighbourhood shops are defined as shops outside the identified shopping areas of Guildford Town Centre, the District Shopping Centres of Ash and East Horsley and the named Local Shopping Centres of the Borough. Such shops, whether in isolation or as a pair or small group, can play an important local function in both urban and rural locations. Where it is claimed that there is no demand for a neighbourhood shop, evidence will normally be sought that the premises has been marketed at a reasonable price and for a period of 12 months prior to the submission of any application. The Council recognises that there may be opportunities to improve the provision for the daily shopping needs of local communities and to improve the viability of local shops by extending existing shops or, in some instances, providing new shops by conversion or new building. The value of services provided by petrol filling stations and outlets such as farm shops where

convenience goods and other day-to-day needs are catered for is also accepted. In considering such proposals the Council will have regard to the general policies of the Plan, particularly those relating to accessibility by means other than the car, access and highway safety, residential amenity and the character and appearance of the area.

- 8.34 As stated in the Supporting Measures in the introduction to this Chapter, the Borough Council operates a village shop rate relief scheme that may be applicable to some shops in rural areas. Those businesses most likely to qualify for rate relief are food shops, pharmacies and post offices.
- 8.35 For proposals involving farm diversification including farm shops see Policy RE8.

