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12.1 Introduction

12.1.1 The pattern of retailing rapidly changes in response to consumer demand and advances in technology. Alternative forms of retailing such as home shopping on the Internet, the growth of factory outlets, and new retail / service sector operators, will have an impact on high street shopping.

12.1.2 Significant changes have taken place in the way retailers operate, such as alterations to the traditional opening hours to include late-night opening and Sunday trading. Some major food operators have introduced smaller stores into City and District centres, partly in response to the move away from out-of-centre retail locations.

12.1.3 This section refers to different types of land uses that are defined in the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) Order 2005 and Use Classes Order 1987 (as amended). For ease of reference, see Appendix 7.

12.1.4 This section also uses other terms that need explanation.

- *Comparison goods are non-food retail items for sale where a reasonable choice is available.*
- *Durable goods are retail goods that are long lasting and would not normally be bought daily.*
- *Specialist goods are those with a particular individual interest or quality, that distinguishes them from other items.*

12.2 Oxford's Retail Hierarchy

12.2.1 Oxford's retail hierarchy starts with the City centre, then the District Centres, and finally neighbourhood shopping centres.

12.2.2 The City centre is the principal commercial centre in Oxfordshire for the retailing of comparison, durable and specialised goods. Oxford City centre has a sub-regional catchment population area of 500,000 and, with the population and expenditure increasing, a corresponding increase in trade is expected.

12.2.3 It is essential to maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of the City centre for the economic prosperity of Oxford, and to enable it to maintain its competitive position in the sub-regional shopping hierarchy.

12.2.4 To comply with Policy RC.1, retail proposals will need to incorporate or extend a primary shopping frontage (as shown on the Proposals Map) or, if no suitable sites or buildings are available, an edge-of-centre site (see Glossary).

POLICY RC.1 - OXFORD'S RETAIL HIERARCHY

Planning permission will only be granted for retail proposals that seek to maintain and enhance the role of Oxford's City centre as the principal retail centre in Oxfordshire with an appropriate range and quality of activities.

12.2.5 There are four District centres - Cowley centre (Templars Square), Cowley Road, Headington and Summertown which form the second tier of the retail hierarchy in Oxford. The District centres fulfil a complementary role to the City centre in providing for the retailing of

convenience and standard durable goods. In addition to these recognised centres, the City centre also has a dual role as a District centre serving the retail needs of the resident, student and workforce population. The City Council wishes to maintain and enhance the role of the District centres.

12.2.6 The District centres are defined in Core Policy CP.3, and on the Proposals Map.

POLICY RC.2 - RETAIL HIERARCHY - DISTRICT CENTRES

Planning permission will only be granted for proposals that seek to maintain and enhance the role of District centres as the second tier of Oxford's retail hierarchy. The District centres are:

- a. Cowley centre (Templars Square);
- b. Cowley Road;
- c. Headington; and
- d. Summertown

The District centres mainly sell convenience, standard durable and specialist goods.

12.2.7 The third tier of the shopping hierarchy comprises neighbourhood shopping centres, in either small groups, parades or single units. Their role is to provide for the day-to-day needs of the local population, so they provide a valuable service. Neighbourhood shopping centres and individual shops are protected against their loss by Policies RC.8 and RC.9 (referred to later in this section).

12.3 Mix of Uses in Shopping Centres

12.3.1 The Proposals Map identifies different areas of shopping frontages in Oxford. These are used to maintain a mix of retail uses at the ground floor level and are split into the following categories:

- Primary;
- Secondary;
- District; and
- Street-specific Controls.

Primary Shopping Frontage

12.3.2 The Primary Shopping Frontage relates solely to the City centre. It aims to ensure the percentage of Class A1 (shop) units remains above 75%. This is calculated as a percentage of all units in the Primary Shopping Frontage, not on an individual street basis.

POLICY RC.3 - PRIMARY SHOPPING FRONTAGE

Within the Primary Shopping Frontage, planning permission will only be granted for:

- a. Class A1 (shop) uses;
- b. Class A2 (financial and professional) uses where the proportion of units at ground (or main pedestrian entry) level in A1 use does not fall below 80% of the total number of units;

- c. Class A3-A5 (food and drink) uses where the proportion of units at ground (or main pedestrian entry) level in A1 use does not fall below 75% of the total units.

Planning permission will not be granted for other uses outside Class A at ground (or main pedestrian entry) level. The areas of Primary Shopping Frontage are defined on the Proposals Map.

District Shopping Frontage

12.3.3 The District Shopping Frontage relates to four District centres, as these have a different character to the City centre. These are Cowley centre (Templars Square), Headington, Summertown, and the core area of shopping on the Cowley Road. Changes from A1 (shop) use to other Class A uses will only be considered in District centres where the proportion of units in A1 use is above 65% of all units. Post offices are protected as Class A1 uses and would be subject to Policy RC.4. Subject to the criteria in Policy RC.4, other uses that may be acceptable in the District Shopping Frontages are primary health facilities, child care facilities and other community type uses. Residential use is not an acceptable use at ground-floor level in the District Shopping Frontages.

POLICY RC.4 - DISTRICT SHOPPING FRONTAGE

Within the District Shopping Frontage, planning permission will only be granted for:

- a. Class A1 (shop) uses
- b. other Class A uses only where the proportion of units at ground level in A1 use does not fall below 65% of the total ground level units in the centre; and
- c. other uses only where the proportion of units at ground level in Class A use does not fall below 95% of the total ground level units in the centre.

The areas of District Shopping Frontage are defined on the Proposals Map.

Note: In calculating the percentage of units in the frontage, residential uses will be excluded.

Secondary Shopping Frontage

12.3.4 The Secondary Shopping Frontages relate to the City centre and parts of the Cowley Road and St. Clements. Its aim is to allow more flexibility and diversification of uses than would be allowed in a Primary Shopping Frontage or District Shopping Frontage. Secondary Shopping Frontages ensure a predominance of Class A1 uses, but allows for other Class A uses. A small proportion of other uses is possible on their merits. Residential use is not an acceptable use at ground-floor level in the Secondary Shopping Frontages.

12.3.5 In the City centre, this is calculated as a percentage of all units in the City centre. For Cowley Road and St. Clements, it is calculated only as a percentage of the total number of units in those streets combined.

POLICY RC.5 - SECONDARY SHOPPING FRONTAGE

Within the Secondary Shopping Frontage, planning permission will only be granted for:

- a. Class A1 (shop) uses;
- b. other Class A uses only where the proportion of units at ground floor level in A1 use does not fall below 50% of total units; and
- c. other uses only where the proportion of units at ground level in Class A uses does not fall below 95% of the total units in that frontage.

The areas of Secondary Shopping Frontage are defined on the Proposals Map.

Note: In calculating the percentage of units, residential uses will be excluded.

Street Specific Controls

12.3.6 The controls set out above do not avoid the problems of an undue concentration of A3-5 (food and drink) uses in some streets. In certain cases, streets have a distinct character or problem that requires Class A1 (shop) uses to be specifically protected from the encroachment of others.

- The High Street east area (Turl Street/King Edward Street to Magdalen Bridge) has a distinctive character, which includes historic buildings and residential properties, and is not suited to A3-5 (food and drink) uses.
- Little Clarendon Street area is a mixed-use area that contains specialist shops and restaurants. A specific street controlled policy is required to maintain its special retail character and vibrance.
- Walton Street area has a distinct character, with a mixture of specialist shops, along with shops that cater for the local needs, and a range of different types of restaurants. However an intensification of Class A3-5 (food and drink) uses is of concern given the close proximity to residential areas.
- The Park End Street and Hythe Bridge Street area comprises an area of mixed uses. There is a concentration of Class A3-5 (food and drink) uses, an increase in these uses is a concern given the close proximity to residential areas and the need to maintain a mix of uses.

POLICY RC.6 - STREET SPECIFIC CONTROLS

Planning permission will be granted within the following streets for Class A1 uses. Other Class A uses will only be granted planning permission subject to the following criteria:

- a. High Street east area: Class A1 (shop) uses not falling below 70% of the total number of ground floor units;
- b. The Little Clarendon Street area: the level of Class A1 (shop) uses not falling below 65% of the total number of ground floor units;
- c. The Walton Street area: the level of Class A1 (shop) uses not falling below 50% of the total number of ground floor units; and
- d. Park End Street and Hythe Bridge Street area: the level of Class A1 (shop) uses not falling below 35% of the total number of ground floor units.

The areas of Street Specific Control frontages are defined on the Proposals Map.

The Covered Market

12.3.7 The City Council recognises the importance of the Covered Market (Grade 2 Listed Building) in adding to the diversity and range of shopping provision in the heart of Oxford. It provides permanent, relatively low-cost accommodation for a range of traditional Class A1 uses (such as fruit and vegetable stalls, butchers, florists and delicatessens), which contribute to its distinctive character. The City Council wish to maintain, enhance and promote its character.

POLICY RC.7 - COVERED MARKET

Within the Covered Market, planning permission will only be granted for:

- a. Class A1 (shop) uses; and
- b. Class A3-5 (food and drink) uses where the proportion of units at ground floor level in A1 use does not fall below 80% of total units.

The area of the Covered Market is defined on the Proposals Map.

Neighbourhood Shopping Centres and Individual Shops

12.3.8 The City Council will protect Neighbourhood Shopping centres and individual small shops outside the main shopping frontages. They fulfil an important retailing function and are compatible with the residential areas in which they are normally found. These areas are not shown on the Proposals Map but are listed in Appendix 9.

12.3.9 Post offices are protected as Class A1 uses, and are subject to Policies RC.8 and RC.9. In other cases proposals for their loss should be supported by evidence that adequate alternative provision is made, in recognition of their role as an important local service.

POLICY RC.8 - NEIGHBOURHOOD SHOPPING CENTRES

Planning permission will only be granted for the loss of a Class A1 (shop) use in Neighbourhood Shopping centres when:

- a. evidence of a lack of viability is demonstrated to support a change of use;
- b. the proportion of units at ground floor level in A1 retail use does not fall below 50% of the total units in the neighbourhood shopping centres;
- c. non-residential uses such as other commercial or community uses will be considered on their individual merits and their added value in providing additional local facilities; and
- d. changes of use to residential use are supported with substantial proof that commercial or community uses are not viable.

POLICY RC.9 - INDIVIDUAL SHOPS

Planning permission will only be granted for the change of use of an individual Class A1 (shop) use outside a centre when:

- a. no other suitable retail occupier can be found following a realistic effort to market the site for its Class A1 (shop) use;
- b. substantial evidence of non-viability has been demonstrated; and
- c. changes of use to residential use are supported by substantial proof that commercial uses are not viable.

12.4 Retail Developments

12.4.1 The need for additional shopping floorspace was examined in the report "Oxford's Retail Needs Study" published in February 2004. There is significant urgent need in both quantitative and qualitative terms to provide additional comparison retail floorspace within Oxford City Centre over the period up to 2011. In the short term, 11,000 to 13,000m² net of new floorspace is needed. Between 31,000 and 36,500m² net will be needed by 2011. Opportunities to meet the need are limited. The Westgate site remains the principal development opportunity. This is discussed in Section 14.0, Development Sites, Policy DS.88.

12.4.2 Other than the Westgate site, the Worcester Street car park and land to the west of St. Aldates and south of Queen Street, provide an opportunity within the City centre for additional retail floorspace. These sites are dealt with in Section 14.0, Development Sites, Policies DS.77 and DS.91.

12.4.3 The frontage to New Inn Hall Street and St. Michael's Street offers the opportunity to add a limited number of small and diverse retail units to these streets. Any retail development will need to respect the listed buildings and the intrinsic character of the Central Conservation Area. This area is not proposed for large-scale redevelopment and will be subject to a Supplementary Planning Document. The Guidance will make it clear which existing buildings and frontages are to be retained.

12.4.4 Section 14.0, Development Sites, identifies additional sites within District centres that are suitable for mixed-use developments, including retail use. These are also listed in Appendix 10. There is no need to make specific allocations for convenience goods. This is partly because the scale of the future capacity for floorspace growth is low, amounting to only approximately 1,400 m² net by 2011. In addition, most parts of Oxford are relatively well provided for in terms of existing food stores. Small retail developments and modest extensions on non-allocated sites within centres would be considered on their merits.

12.5 Environmental Improvements to the City and District Centres

City centre

12.5.1 Cornmarket Street and part of Broad Street were made daytime pedestrian precincts as part of the Oxford Transport Strategy (OTS). Full pedestrianisation is not feasible, as servicing for many premises is possible only from the front and therefore within the pedestrian area. The City Council is investigating the daytime pedestrianisation of Queen Street. As with Cornmarket, full pedestrianisation would not be possible because service vehicles would need access.

12.5.2 The Public Realm Strategy for Oxford gives detailed guidance on materials, street furniture, signs, special needs, trees and open space, public art and sustainable quality. The City Council will seek contributions towards improvements in the City centre from new major developments, and changes of use, which attract a large number of people within the City centre. Improvements to the City centre should be in keeping with the Public Realm Strategy, and should give priority to improving busy pedestrian streets.

POLICY RC.10 - ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS TO THE CITY CENTRE

In conjunction with the County Council as Highway Authority, the City Council will seek:

- a. the daytime pedestrianisation of Queen Street; and
- b. improved facilities and priority for pedestrians in City centre streets.

The City Council will seek environmental improvements in the City centre consistent with the Public Realm Strategy for Oxford, particularly in streets with high levels of pedestrian activity, namely:

- c. Cornmarket Street;
- d. Queen Street and Bonn Square;

- e. New Inn Hall Street, St Michael's Street, Market Street, Ship Street;
- f. St. Ebbe's Street, Pennyfarthing Place and Pembroke Street;
- g. George Street, Magdalen Street and Broad Street; and
- h. High Street, Carfax and St Aldate's.

Where appropriate, the City Council will seek contributions from new major developments and changes of use towards improvements to pedestrian priority and the pedestrian environment within the City centre, which will be secured by a planning obligation.

District and Neighbourhood centres

12.5.3 The need to create a safe, attractive and convenient pedestrian environment applies equally to the District centres (Cowley Road, Cowley Centre (Templars Square), Headington and Summertown), all of which are bisected by busy, roads and Neighbourhood Shopping centres. The City Council will encourage improvements to the environment and shopping facilities of the District and Neighbourhood centres. Public consultation and urban design studies will be undertaken to formulate an agreed vision or framework for the improvements. The improvements will relate to:

- traffic and pedestrian measures, designed to make the District and Neighbourhood centres easy and safe for pedestrians to use;
- the environment, such as new landscaping, additional street furniture, seating, paving and lighting;
- public art.

POLICY RC.11 - ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS TO THE DISTRICT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SHOPPING CENTRES

In the District and Neighbourhood centres, the City Council will:

- a. support and, where appropriate, implement measures to make a safe and convenient environment for pedestrians;
- b. seek to introduce traffic management measures to reduce conflicts between pedestrians and road users or increase the share of roadspace given to pedestrians where appropriate; and
- c. promote measures to improve the pedestrian environment.

Planning permission will be granted for developments which support improvements to the environment, shopping facilities, accessibility and attractiveness of the District and Neighbourhood centres.

Where appropriate the City Council will seek contributions from new major developments and changes of use towards improvements to pedestrian priority and the pedestrian environment within the District and Neighbourhood centres which will be secured by a planning obligation.

12.6 Out-of-Centre Retailing

12.6.1 Section 2.0, Core Policies explains the sequential test that will be applied to all developments, including retail, that attract a large number of people. The City Council considers that there is unlikely to be a need for further out-of-centre retail provision in Oxford within the Plan period. In reaching this conclusion, the City Council has taken into account Government advice which encourages sustainable retail development; the sites identified in the City centre (particularly Westgate) and District centres; the existing level of out-of-centre retail provision; the need to safeguard the vitality and viability of the retail hierarchy within Oxford; traffic generation; and highway safety implications.

12.6.2 There is one unimplemented planning permission for an out-of-centre store on Lamarsh Road, Botley. This site has potential for other competing uses such as employment. Section 14.0, Development Sites, deals with the redevelopment of this site.

12.6.3 Any extensions to existing out-of-centre retail premises will be assessed against the sequential test, as if it were a new development. The City Council considers it unlikely that further out-of-centre retailing will be needed during the Plan period. However, should a need arise for out-of-centre retail development, proposals will be determined in accordance with all the relevant policies in the Plan (in particular Policy CP.3) and taking into account the impact of the proposed development on the vitality and viability of existing centres.

12.7 Food and Drink Outlets

12.7.1 The service sector has grown considerably in recent years, particularly in Class A3-5 (food and drink) uses. Class A3-5 uses are proposed for some development sites, and are acceptable in the defined shopping frontages included in Policies RC.3 to RC.9, provided they meet the specific criteria. These uses make an important contribution to the vitality and viability of City and District centres, but they can have an impact (both during the day and evening), particularly when outlets are clustered, leading to environmental problems, transport problems and loss of residential amenity.

12.7.2 In granting planning permission for a Class A3-5 (food and drink) use, the City Council may impose conditions controlling the hours of operation or excluding a take-away service.

POLICY RC.12 - FOOD AND DRINK OUTLETS

Planning permission will only be granted for Class A3-5 (food and drink) uses where the City Council is satisfied that they will not give rise to unacceptable environmental problems or nuisance from noise, smell or visual disturbance, including the impact of any equipment or plant associated with the use.

The City Council will impose planning conditions to control the impact of food and

drink outlets where necessary.

12.8 Shop Fronts and Advertisements

Shop Fronts and Fascias

12.8.1 The design and materials used for fascias and the lettering placed on them needs careful attention. The shop front should be proportionate to the building as a whole and the fascia should be proportionate to the shop front. The shop front should always be seen as an integral part of the whole facade of the building. New shop fronts offer an important opportunity to enhance the visual appearance of the streetscene and therefore a high standard of design is required.

POLICY RC.13 - SHOP FRONTS

Planning permission will only be granted for new shop fronts whose design and materials respect the style, proportions and character of the existing building and enhance the streetscene.

Advertisements

12.8.2 The City Council considers that illuminated fascia signs can add to the vitality of the City centre. However, we prefer individually illuminated letters on an opaque background or external illumination, rather than intense illumination. One single projecting sign per occupier at a fascia level is considered appropriate. In general, we will resist advertisements on the upper floors.

12.8.3 The highest standards of advertisement and shop signs are required in sensitive locations of the City centre outside the primary shopping areas, such as parts of High Street, Broad Street, and other historic streets. Discretion in the use of illuminated advertisements is positively encouraged to protect the special character and appearance of these streets and the individual historic buildings.

12.8.4 Advertisement consent is controlled by the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 1992.

POLICY RC.14 - ADVERTISEMENTS

Advertisement consent will be granted for outdoor advertisement design proposals that:

- a. suit their visual setting, in terms of scale, design, appearance and materials;
- b. preserve or enhance the visual amenity of the building; and
- c. do not significantly prejudice highway safety or residential amenity.

Shutters and Canopies

12.8.5 The City Council wishes to ensure that external security shutters, awnings, blinds and canopies are integrated into the shopfront. The design and materials used should respect the character of the building and not appear unduly prominent in the streetscene.

POLICY RC.15 - SHUTTERS AND CANOPIES

Planning permission will only be granted for external grilled security shutters, awnings, blinds and canopies on shopfronts which:

- a. are integrated into the design of the shopfront; and
- b. use sympathetic materials that respect the character of the building, its setting and the streetscene.

Cashpoint machines

12.8.6 The location of cashpoint machines needs to be assessed to ensure they do not detract from the character of the building, or cause pedestrian or highway safety problems.

POLICY RC.16 - CASHPOINT MACHINES

Planning permission will only be granted for external cashpoint machines on buildings where their use or position would not:

- a. visually detract from the character of the building;
- b. compromise pedestrian or highway safety;
- c. cause obstruction from queues;
- d. result in the loss of cycle parking; and
- e. cause safety problems for people using the machines.

Flyposting

12.8.7 Indiscriminate flyposting around Oxford can detract from the character and quality of the environment. The City Council will discourage flyposting by encouraging existing and establishing appropriate new poster sites for advertising events.

POLICY RC.17 - FLYPOSTING

Where appropriate, the City Council will use its planning powers to discourage flyposting and other forms of unauthorised advertising by:

- a. promoting the use of existing poster sites;
- b. identifying suitable additional sites for advertising events; and
- c. attaching planning conditions to ensure that site hoardings are specifically designed to deter flyposting and graffiti.

12.9 Commercial Leisure

12.9.1 The term 'commercial leisure' generally applies to multiplex cinemas, bingo halls, nightclubs, tenpin bowling, indoor sports facilities including health and fitness centres, pubs, restaurants and casinos. It includes commercial providers of sporting and leisure opportunities but generally excludes public and voluntary sectors and professional sports clubs. These types of commercial developments tend to attract large numbers of people, which can give rise to traffic, parking, environmental and amenity problems.

12.9.2 Commercial leisure has grown rapidly in recent years in response to changes in lifestyle and an increase in recreation and leisure time. Oxford has a lack of commercial leisure developments, as a survey of Oxford residents indicated.

12.9.3 Section 2.0, Core Policies, sets out the sequential test for uses that attract a large number of people. Commercial leisure uses fit that description, so the first preference is to locate such uses in existing centres of an appropriate scale.

12.9.4 Section 14.0, Development Sites and Appendix 10 highlights several sites where mixed-use developments would be acceptable, and where an element of commercial leisure development is considered appropriate.

12.9.5 The Oxpens site represents the best opportunity for accommodating commercial leisure development in the City centre. Its relationship to the proposed Westgate Centre extension, the improved transport links serving it, and the increased number of pedestrian routes should make it a sustainable development with integrated transport links. Section 14.0, Development Sites, supports proposals for its redevelopment for commercial leisure as part of a mixed-use development.

12.9.6 Planning permission exists for a large-scale commercial leisure development at Minchery Farm. It comprises a 9-screen multiplex, a 26-lane tenpin bowling hall, a night club and a health and fitness centre. The City Council considers that there is unlikely to be a need for further out-of-centre commercial leisure development during the Plan period.

Concert Hall and Conference Facilities

12.9.7 Oxford needs a multi-function building that may contain a concert hall and conference facility. Business related tourism is a growth sector and needs further venues to accommodate business meetings. The development of business tourism would help to diversify Oxford's tourism industry, would produce additional sources of income, particularly during the out-of-peak season, and would make better use of facilities. The income from conferences would help support a concert hall in a dual use building.

12.9.8 Section 14.0, Development Sites, policy DS.62, supports proposals for the development of a dual use building for a concert hall and conference facility as part of a mixed-use development on the Oxpens site.

Public Houses

12.9.9 Public houses have two distinct roles: firstly, in mainly residential areas as a community facility; and secondly as part of the historic legacy of Oxford. The City Council will prevent their loss to alternative uses unless a lack of viability can be clearly demonstrated over a reasonable time-scale, which is not due to operational or marketing practices. Viability should take into account a range of factors such as evidence of the property having been properly marketed for its existing use at a reasonable price, the catchment population, other facilities in the area serving the same market, and accessibility by modes other than the private car.

POLICY RC.18 - PUBLIC HOUSES

Planning permission will only be granted for the change of use of a public house if one

or more of the following criteria are met:

- a. no other potential occupier can be found following a realistic effort to market the premises for its existing use;
- b. substantial evidence of non-viability is submitted; and
- c. it is demonstrated that suitable alternative public houses exist to meet the needs of the local community.

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