

# **Oxford Local Plan 2036**

## **Inspectors' Response to OCC6**

The Inspectors have taken note of the suggested mod as contained in the Council's answer to Q27 in OCC.2 and as updated in respect of the District Centres in OCC.6 and have carried out the necessary unaccompanied site visits sufficient to inform them of the situation on the ground. Their interim views are as follows.

The original proposed mod contained in the Council's answer to Q27 in OCC.2 looks reasonable in that it allows for the exceptional circumstances clause to be applied to units within Local as well as District Centres and also deletes existing criterion (p), which is unclear and therefore likely to be ineffective because it makes the Policy unsound.

East Oxford – Cowley Road District Centre (Q1 in IC.6)

The Council acknowledges that 50% Class A1 units is an unrealistic proportion to seek within the Policy here because this is the current number and to retain it would therefore fail to retain a reasonable level of flexibility. The new mod suggests reducing the figure to 45%, which would provide some flexibility and headroom to be effective, as is the case with the other District Centres. This is agreed to be a reasonable solution, whilst adequately protecting the key foodstore and convenience goods shops in this important district centre that serves the local resident and student population.

Cowley District Centre (Q2 & Q3 in IC.6)

It is acknowledged that the retail units in Templars Shopping Park on the north side of Between Towns Road are larger than most if not all of the units within Templars Square Shopping Centre on the south side of the Road. But the types of retail uses (e.g. clothes, shoes, and food stores) on the former could equally be accommodated in the latter. A resolution to grant permission for a comprehensive retail redevelopment has occurred (16/03006/FUL) and this modernisation would be likely make NewRiver REIT's Templars Square Shopping Centre more attractive and desirable to retail users and customers. Very few of the units in the current Templars Square are vacant and only 3 are being used by charity shops (a very small percentage of total units). These charity shops do not have a rundown appearance and provide useful convenience shopping. It is not unusual to anticipate some such shops and some vacancies in a shopping centre likely to be redeveloped in the near future. If the vacancy situation were to deteriorate markedly in the short term this could be taken into consideration within the 'exceptional circumstances' criteria of the Policy.

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