

# Chapter 9

# Shopping

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## ***Corporate Aims***

We will develop a strong and sustainable local economy, encouraging business and investment into Eastbourne.

## ***Corporate Objectives***

P4: Develop a vibrant and successful Town Centre.

## **Policy Objectives**

1. To support a vital, viable and sustainable hierarchy of shopping centres which meets the needs of all the population;
2. To support and promote the Town Centre as the primary location for retail development;
3. To discourage further out-of-centre retail development where this would compromise the vitality and viability of existing shopping centres.

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## **Introduction**

- 9.1 This chapter looks at the general retail planning strategy for the Borough as a whole. Reference should also be made to the Town Centre chapter as there is a clear overlap with the specific, detailed policies for the town's principal retail area.
- 9.2 Within the Borough a clear retail hierarchy can be identified ranging from the Town Centre, through district, local and neighbourhood centres to small single shops. The town also has a range of out-of centre retail parks and superstores.
- 9.3 It is estimated that in 1999 the Town Centre comprised some 140,300 square metres of gross shopping floorspace.<sup>48</sup> 60% of this floorspace was comparison shopping, with an annual turnover of about £136 million, and 5% was convenience shopping with an annual turnover of about £25 million. Of the remaining floorspace 26% was in service trade businesses and the remaining 9% of floorspace was vacant.
- 9.4 Retail turnover in the six district centres identified under existing planning policy in the Eastbourne Borough Plan 1998 was about £53.75 million per annum, with the Langney Centre accounting for nearly 40% of this turnover. It is more difficult to identify the turnover of the neighbourhood centres identified in the Eastbourne Borough Plan 1998 but it is thought to be in the order of £11.85 million per annum.
- 9.5 The suburban shopping centres have also seen a decline in the number of convenience and comparison goods outlets. For convenience goods the number of outlets has fallen from 146 in 1987 to 124 in 1992 and 80 outlets in 1999. The number of comparison goods shops has declined by 11% between 1987 and 1992, after which there had been a small 2.5% recovery. To a certain extent these losses have been compensated by increases in some service trade sub-sectors notably cafes/restaurants, take-aways, estate agents and insurance brokers. However overall this was only a partial compensation and there has been a marked increase in vacancy levels, with some centres particularly badly affected. Across all the centres vacancy levels have increased from 4.2% of units in 1987 to 11.9% in 1999.
- 9.6 The Council has prepared an assessment of the most likely need for new convenience and comparison floorspace over the Plan period. This assessment is set-out in Background Paper No. 14<sup>49</sup>.
- 9.7 The audit has highlighted that the retail sector has been subject to considerable change over a fairly short period of time. There are indications of further possible changes that may have an effect during the period of this Plan and which may affect the assessment of retail floorspace needed. In particular the trend toward electronic shopping may reduce the expected growth rate for shop-based sales; whilst electronic management of stock may result in shops using their floorspace more efficiently and reduce the requirement for new floorspace. It will, therefore, be important to regularly monitor the vitality and viability of existing shopping centres to assess how they are being affected by changes in retailing

<sup>48</sup> Estimate based upon work undertaken by the Council's retail consultant. Detail available in Background Paper No. 9: Retail Audit

<sup>49</sup> Background Paper No.14: Shopping Floorspace Requirement.

methods and regularly review the assumptions on which the assessed need for retail floorspace has been based.

- 9.8 The Town and Country Planning Use Classes Order (1987), as amended, distinguishes three categories of use appropriate to a shopping area:
- Class A1 - shops
  - Class A2 - financial and professional services
  - Class A3 - food and drink

### ***The Retail Hierarchy***

- 9.9 The existing retail hierarchy serves a range of different retail needs. Major comparison goods can be purchased in the Town Centre whilst more limited, particularly convenience goods can be purchased close to home in the neighbourhood centres. It therefore represents a highly sustainable solution to retail provision which should be supported. Nevertheless some shopping centres are failing and given recent changes in the retail sector are unlikely to become viable again. It is, therefore, proposed that in the first instance retail premises in these areas should be permitted to change to B1(business) or D1(non-residential institutions) uses which serve the needs of the local area. However where it can be demonstrated that the premises have been marketed without interest over a period of time conversion or redevelopment for residential use will be permitted given the need to find homes within the existing built-up area (see chapter 6, Housing). This process of “managed decline” should assist any remaining premises in the centre to remain viable, and should also reduce problems, such as vandalism, associated with vacant units.

#### **Policy SH1: Retail Hierarchy**

**For planning purposes the Council will adopt the following shopping hierarchy:**

- a) Town Centre Shopping Area Centres (PSA and SSA on the Proposals Map);**
- b) District Shopping Centres (DSC on the Proposals Map):**
  - Green Street (Albert Parade);
  - Hampden Park (Brassey Avenue);
  - Langney Shopping Centre;
  - Meads Street;
  - Old Town (Crown Street/Safeway area);
  - Seaside (Langney Road to Springfield Road and adjacent to St James' Road);
  - Seaside (Whitley Road to Seaford Road, excluding existing residential properties).
- c) Local Shopping Centres (LSC on the Proposals Map):**
  - Rodmill (Framfield Way);
  - St Anthony's (Beatty Road);
  - Seaside (Hydney Street to Churchdale Road).
- d) Neighbourhood Shopping Centres (NSC on the Proposals Map):**
  - Hampden Park (The Broadway (part only); Holly Place; Queens Parade);
  - Old Town (Victoria Drive; Green Street (by Dacre Road));
  - Upperton (Willingdon Road (by Mill Road));
  - Meads (Grand Hotel Buildings; Carlisle Road);
  - Seaside (Rye Street to Winchelsea Street);
  - St Anthony's (Winston Crescent);
  - Town Centre area (Cavendish Place: Tideswell Road to Ashford Road);
  - Langney (Etchingham Road; Milfoil Drive; Pembury Road).

- e) Other small single shops;
- f) Out-of-centre (OSC on the Proposals Map) which include retail parks and single superstores.

### **Policy SH2: Business Uses Outside the Retail Hierarchy**

Outside of the Town Centre, district, local and neighbourhood shopping centres identified in Policy SH1, planning permission will be granted for the change of use of premises in class A1, A2 or A3 use to class B1 or D1 uses. Where it can be demonstrated that premises have been marketed for both retail or business use without interest, at a price that reflects local market prices, planning approval will be granted for conversion or redevelopment to residential use.

### ***New Retail Development***

- 9.10 Planning Policy Guidance Note 6<sup>50</sup> seeks to promote the vitality and viability of existing Town Centres, which should be the preferred location for new retail development, rather than encourage the development of less sustainable out-of centre retail parks. The Council's corporate objective of developing a vibrant and successful Town Centre as part of a strong and sustainable local economy is wholly consistent with government guidance.
- 9.11 PPG6 also recommends that local authorities consider the need for new retail development over the period of the Plan. Local Authorities should then adopt a sequential approach to identifying preferred locations and selecting sites for new retail development. Policies SH3, SH4 and SH5 set-out how the sequential approach is to be applied in Eastbourne. The Town Centre Chapter identifies a preferred location for development and looks to an early alteration of this Plan to bring forward further sites. Retail proposals within the Town Centre or in designated district or local centres will not be required to demonstrate a need for new shopping proposals. Schemes on the edge of and out of designated shopping centres will be required to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Council that they are needed. Simply identifying a potential growth in retail expenditure or showing that there is no physical capacity for the proposal elsewhere in the town will be an insufficient demonstration of retail need. For the purposes of interpreting Policy SH3 a designated shopping centre is the Town Centre, or a district or a local centre. In interpreting the sequential approach to retail development the Council will have regard to the secondary impact on existing retail warehouses which may convert to the sale of comparison goods in direct competition with the established centres as a result of the proposal.

### **Policy SH3: New Retail Development**

Planning permission will be granted for new shopping developments which are within an existing designated shopping centre, providing that they meet the following criteria:

- a) the development is well designed in terms of siting, scale, materials and landscaping (see Policy UHT1);
- b) provision of adequate off-street and where appropriate short term car parking (including provision for people with disabilities), access and loading facilities;
- c) provision for access by pedestrians, people with disabilities, cyclists and those using public transport;

<sup>50</sup> Planning Policy Guidance Note 6: Town Centres and Retail Development, DoE, (1996)

- d) there would be no significant impact on residential, visual or environmental amenity (see Policies HO20, UHT4 and NE28);
- e) an acceptable transport impact;
- f) policies in this Plan in respect of environmentally sustainable development are complied with, including NE3 (conservation of water resources); NE4 (sustainable drainage systems); NE5 (minimisation of construction waste); NE6 (recycling facilities) and NE11 (energy saving measures);
- g) appropriate measures are included for safety and security, including crime prevention measures in layout and design (see Policy UHT1); and
- h) provision of appropriate infrastructure (see Policy IR2).

Proposals on the edge of these centres will only be considered if it is demonstrated that there are no suitable sites available within the centre or nearby Town, district or local centres.

#### **Policy SH4: Retail Development Outside the Shopping Hierarchy (including edge of centre proposals)**

In order to maintain and enhance the retailing function of Eastbourne Town Centre, district and local centres, planning applications for shopping developments outside designated shopping centres will only be permitted if they meet the following criteria in full:

- a) the need for the development can be satisfactorily demonstrated;
- b) the proposed development, cumulatively with recently completed and planned developments with outstanding planning permission, would not undermine the vitality and viability of the existing Town, district and local shopping centres;
- c) a suitable site does not exist within a designated shopping centre. Preference will be given to sites on the edge of the designated Town Centre before those outside designated shopping centres;
- d) the additional traffic which the development would generate can be satisfactorily and safely accommodated by the surrounding road network;
- e) the development is located and designed to be easily accessible by public transport, pedestrians, including people with disabilities and other mobility difficulties, and by bicycle;
- f) there would be no significant impact on residential, visual or environmental amenity (see Policies HO20, UHT4 and NE28), including views from the Downland (Policy UHT3);
- g) it would not materially prejudice the provision of other major land uses, particularly the supply of land for employment, housing, and community uses such as open space;
- h) the development is well designed in terms of siting, scale, materials and landscaping (see Policy UHT1);
- i) policies in this Plan in respect of environmentally sustainable development are complied with, including NE3 (conservation of water resources); NE4 (sustainable drainage systems); NE5 (minimisation of construction waste); NE6 (recycling facilities) and NE11 (energy saving measures);
- j) appropriate measures are included for safety and security, including crime prevention measures in layout and design (see Policy UHT1); and
- k) provision of appropriate infrastructure (see Policy IR2).

Proposals in excess of 2,500 sq. metres gross will also be required to meet Policy SH5.

**Policy SH5: Large Retail Development On the Edge or Outside Designated Shopping Centres**

In addition to the requirements of Policy SH4, all shopping proposals in excess of 2,500 sq. metres (gross) outside designated shopping centres, will also be required to satisfactorily demonstrate:

- a) that there is a need for the development;
- b) that by themselves, or cumulatively with recently completed and planned developments, they will not seriously affect the vitality and viability of existing shopping centres;
- c) the applicants sequential approach to site selection and the availability of suitable alternative sites;
- d) their accessibility by a choice of means of transport, giving an assessment of the number or proportion of customers likely to arrive by different means of transport, and how the proposal will contribute to the objective of reducing the need to travel, particularly by car;
- e) the likely changes in travel patterns over the catchment area; and
- f) any significant environmental impacts including those on existing shopping centres.

- 9.12 The impact of Policy SH2 above is likely to be a reduction in the number of small single shops. This is regrettable, as the local corner shop represents a very sustainable approach to retail provision, but it is recognised that most of these single shops are ill-suited to modern retailing methods and are no longer viable. However the Council is keen to promote a more sustainable approach to retailing and would support the provision of modern “8 ‘til late” local convenience stores in appropriate locations, especially associated with larger residential developments.

**Policy SH6: New Local Convenience Stores**

Planning permission will be granted for local convenience stores of no greater than 500 square metres gross outside of the retail hierarchy established in Policy SH1 where it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that there is a need for such a facility, provided that:

- a) there is no adverse effect on residential amenity (see Policy HO20);
- b) the development is integrated into the pedestrian/cycle network;
- c) the development is well designed in terms of siting, scale and materials, and includes appropriate landscaping (see Policy UHT1);
- d) appropriate measures are included for safety and security, including crime prevention measures in layout and design (see Policy UHT1);
- e) provision of appropriate access arrangements for people with disabilities and mobility difficulties;
- f) adequate short term parking facilities are available.

**Existing Shopping Centres**

- 9.13 Paragraphs 10.23 and 10.24 of Chapter 10 (The Town Centre) set-out the policies that will be applied to maintain the vitality and viability of the primary and secondary shopping areas of the Town Centre.
- 9.14 The balance of A1 retail uses to A2 or A3 retail uses is also a valid consideration in maintaining the vitality and viability of district, local and neighbourhood centres. Too many non-A1 uses may result in “dead frontage” that makes the centre less attractive to shoppers so that ultimately it becomes less viable.

**Policy SH7: District, Local and Neighbourhood Centres**

Within the district, local and neighbourhood centres (DSC, LSC and NSC on the

**Proposals Map), proposals for the change of use of existing ground floor shopping units from Class A1 uses to uses in Classes A2 and A3 will be considered having regard to the following criteria:**

- a) the location and prominence of the premises within the shopping frontage;**
- b) the floorspace and frontage of the premises;**
- c) the number, distribution and proximity of other ground floor premises in use as, or with planning permission for, A2 and A3 uses (within any centre A1 uses should predominate);**
- d) the particular nature and character of the use proposed, including the level of activity associated with it;**
- e) whether the use would harm residential amenity (see Policy HO20);**
- f) whether adequate short term parking facilities are available.**

- 9.15 The Council recognises that many of the existing district, local and neighbourhood centres have been experiencing difficulties, and have been encouraging the formation of local trader associations to represent these areas and actively promote themselves. Council funds are limited and it is unlikely that major environmental improvement schemes can be instigated for these centres. Nevertheless there are proposals within the provisional Local Transport Plan for area wide traffic calming measures which may be appropriate to these areas, and other opportunities will be taken to improve the attractiveness of these areas.

