SHOPPING AND TOWN CENTRES

From ‘metropolitan’ centres (like Central Ealing) to small local shopping parades, shopping centres are a vital part of everyday life, and provide an essential service for people living and working in the borough. However shopping centres provide not only shopping, but also a range of civic, amenity, employment and leisure services, and their image and appearance is important to local community life and identity. As a result this chapter covers policies for a wide range of issues relating to town centre functions.

Within the Borough, different people require different kinds of shopping facilities, and different shopping centres pose different challenges to the planning process. Centres such as Ealing and Southall have attained a status that extends far beyond the borough, whereas smaller scale shopping parades and individual corner shops provide goods mainly for the benefit of local residents. Therefore the policies within this chapter attempt to meet the range of needs of the community as a whole, whilst maintaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of all the Borough’s Centres.

For the Shopping and Town Centres Chapter, the strategic Policy 1.7 is -

To encourage convenient shops and services throughout the borough, by recognising the distinctive functions of the metropolitan, major, district, neighbourhood and local centres, and the importance of a good environment for the mixture of shopping, business and community activities needed to sustain these centres.

In order to achieve this overall aim, there are eight policies for the Chapter Shopping and Town Centres, and these together with their justifications, are set out on the subsequent pages of this chapter.

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Policies for Shopping and Town Centres

7.1 Promoting and Enhancing a Network of Centres and Promoting Key Sites

1. The Council will seek to maintain, and where necessary improve the function, character, vitality and viability of the established shopping hierarchy, by recognising the distinctive function of:

   (i) Metropolitan;
   (ii) Major;
(iii) District and neighbourhood centres; and
(iv) local parades.

2. In order to achieve this, the Council will endeavour to achieve the highest quality environment and surroundings for all who use the borough’s Shopping Centres.

3. The Council will also encourage appropriate development on key sites within the town centres of Ealing, Southall, Acton, Greenford and Hanwell, including about 16,500 sq.m of new net retail floor space in Ealing metropolitan centre (Ealing Broadway – about 13,000 sq m and West Ealing - about 3,500 sq m).

Within Ealing, as elsewhere, a hierarchy of shopping centres has evolved over a considerable period of time. These range from the Metropolitan Centre of Central Ealing, to small local shopping parades which provide purely a local service. In light of sub regional reconciliation of local and strategic assessments of need and capacity, these centres have been divided up within this hierarchy into metropolitan, major, district, neighbourhood and local parades, according to their size and the facilities that they provide (see Table 7A). This is in accordance with ‘The London Plan’, Annex 1, and regional planning guidance, although the Council recognises that this hierarchy is flexible, and centres will be monitored and their categorisation reviewed if appropriate. It is therefore important that development in one centre does not harm the vitality and viability of any existing town centre, or part of an existing centre.

All of these shopping centres, both large and small, contribute to the economic and social well-being of a community, and their success depends on their maintenance, regeneration, and creation of a centre that is attractive to shoppers.

Enhancement of shopping centres deals with improving the physical environment such as streetscape, the redevelopment and re-use of vacant properties/sites, and maintaining the current network of shopping provision around the borough and beyond. The Council also considers that main shopping centres should meet the requirement for essential ancillary facilities, such as accessible public conveniences, including provision for people with disabilities, places of refreshment, crèche, baby feeding and changing facilities.

The Council recognises the important role of providing Shopmobility schemes integrated within Shopping Centres. Therefore the Council will encourage Shopmobility and other "mobility enabling schemes" in new development, and in existing shopping and entertainment areas, in order to make these more useable by elderly people, people with disabilities, and others who have difficulty in getting to and from the shops with heavy bags.

The development sites listed in Schedule 10.21 indicate the appropriate range of uses in the centres. Further guidance on the scale of development which would be appropriate (and would not harm other centres) is given in the Town Centre Strategies Supplementary Guidance. There will be co-ordination between the Council, businesses and the local community, and the surrounding boroughs on retail development and shopping centres, in order to develop a consistent network. The Council will safeguard existing centres by liaising with neighbouring boroughs to discourage retail developments that have a detrimental effect on shopping centres in Ealing.
Table 7A
Definition of the Shopping Hierarchy

Primary Source: The London Plan, Annex 1, 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Centre Type and Classification</th>
<th>LBE Centre</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shopping Centre:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>A general term to describe all types of retail centre.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Metropolitan Centres:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Outstanding shopping centres found in outer London, typically having more than 100,000 sqm of retail floorspace and a high level of comparison shopping, including a broad range of multiple retailers and several Department Stores. Most have developed complementary activities that draw people in outside peak shopping hours.</td>
<td>Ealing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major Centres:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Important shopping and service centres, but are typically smaller in scale and closer together than those in the metropolitan category. They usually have at least 50,000 sqm of retail floorspace and some may have developed specialist roles. With sizeable local catchment areas, many of these centres have established cultural and entertainment facilities that will keep them alive in the evenings.</td>
<td>Southall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>District Centres:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranging in size from 10,000 – 50,000 sqm of retail floorspace, these centres provide convenience and services for local customers, with comparison shopping floorspace rarely exceeding 50% of the total. The majority of people that use them are on foot, although access by car and public transport needs to be provided for. Some have individual specialist functions due to their lower rent.</td>
<td>Acton, Greenford, Hanwell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Town Centres:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A term used to describe the larger centres within the Borough, i.e. Ealing, Southall, Acton, Greenford and Hanwell.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neighbourhood Centres:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a variety of convenience shops, a proportion of comparison shops, and a number of shops providing essential local services.</td>
<td>East Acton, Northfields, Northolt, Perivale, Pitshanger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Centre / Single Units:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composed mainly of convenience and service shops and a very limited amount of comparison shops.</td>
<td>South Ealing, Sudbury Hill, Park Royal, West Way Cross</td>
</tr>
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Town Centres are vital to the prosperity of the Borough. The maintenance of the shopping hierarchy (as outlined above) will focus new investment, and thereby assist in achieving regeneration or consolidation as appropriate.

7.1-J6

At the top of the list, Ealing Metropolitan and Southall Major centre, have attained a status that extends beyond the borough. They offer a wide range of activities that includes shopping, recreational and community facilities. Ealing Metropolitan Centre has achieved growth and the Council aims to maintain this success. Southall town centre is growing in significance. This major centre, with its diverse community and range of cultures, has a reputation as an excellent
centre for Asian retailing. The Council aims to sustain the vitality of the existing shopping centre and to broaden the range of facilities available. 7.1-J7

Acton and Greenford District Centres are shopping centres that also offer an important range of activities, and possess considerable potential to serve their areas. The Council is currently coordinating plans to regenerate Acton District Centre and aims to promote the smaller Greenford District Centre for the benefit of the north of the borough. 7.1-J8

The Council recognises that each town centre is unique, with different strengths, weaknesses and functions. Therefore, the Council has formulated Town Centre strategies for those centres which require a clear statement of how competitiveness can be maintained, or in some cases, how the centre can be regenerated. These strategies, as well as setting out aims and objectives, also contain specific proposals; all within the framework set out in this Plan. Many of these are too detailed to include in the UDP (such as town centre management issues) but some will involve specific sites. Due to the detailed nature of the strategies, they have been subject to consultation, and where necessary, have included community involvement in their formulation. 7.1-J9

The Strategies have been produced jointly where possible with the private sector, building on those successful partnerships that are already in place between businesses, the Town Centre Manager (where appropriate), and the Council. The strategies will assist them to remain competitive against neighbouring centres by means of qualitative improvements, replacement of outworn buildings and infrastructure, and, in some cases, modest growth in the quantity of retail provision or other complementary uses. In addition the Council has produced Streetscape Design Guides, to guide a consistent approach to development in each Centre. 7.1-J10

7.2 New Shopping Development and the Sequential Approach

1. The Council expects all significant new development of shopping and other key town centre uses to take place in existing centres, at a scale appropriate to their position in the shopping hierarchy. Where shopping and other key town centre uses are proposed outside an existing centre, account will be taken of retail need, the sequential approach, and the effect on the vitality and viability of existing centres. SPG/SPD Town Centre Strategies (SPG) G0vt Documents PPS 6 Planning for Town Centres The London Plan 2008 Policy 3D.2

2. Only where a need for additional retail floorspace has been established, and a suitable site is not available in a centre or on the edge of a centre, may it be appropriate to combine the proposal with an existing out of centre retail area and negotiate public transport improvements.

3. In considering all retail development proposals, the Council will require that development is suitable in terms of its design, including scale, integration, mix and character. There should also be an acceptable traffic impact, including the minimisation of car borne traffic and very good public transport, cycle, and pedestrian accessibility.
Government Guidance stresses the importance of maintaining Town Centres as the focus for new investment. Shopping, offices and a wide variety of other uses can be most sustainably provided in a location well served by public transport. In this way, shopping facilities and other services can be conveniently located together, and one shopping trip can be combined with visits to other essential services.

Retail developments are also a very important opportunity to enhance existing Shopping Centres within Ealing, increasing the attractiveness of the centre to shoppers, by for example increasing the variety of shops on offer, and bringing infrastructure improvements in the form of better servicing and car parking. In order to achieve such enhancements, the Council recognises the importance of creating a balance between development, regeneration and conservation, improving facilities whilst maintaining the character of the centre. This balance also applies to creating a diversity of uses appropriate to the function, location and retention of each centre; and the creation of a good environment to provide a mixture of shopping, leisure, commercial and community activities needed to sustain the centre.

PPG 6 (para: 1.10) states “in drawing up their development plans, local planning authorities should, after considering the need for new development, adopt a sequential approach to selecting sites for new retail development. Both local planning authorities and developers selecting sites for development should be able to demonstrate that all potential town centre options have been thoroughly assessed before less central sites are considered for development for key town centre uses”.

This policy has been developed using existing information regarding retail need in Central Ealing, and Central Southall. However this issue is to be investigated more fully, and when the results become available will be inserted into the policy framework.

Within town centres, proposed development should be appropriate to the scale and function of the centre identified. Provided that it is, the Council will accept that it meets a demonstrable need. This understanding arises from the work undertaken during the Revised Unitary Development Plan process. Outside town centres, applicants must demonstrate that their proposal can be justified on the basis of retail need and that they have followed the sequential test.

The Sequential Test: the first preference should be to locate within existing town centres, and only when town centre sites are not available should edge of centre sites be considered. It is only after the consideration of these locations that out-of-centre locations should be considered, provided that these are readily accessible by a choice of means of transport, including public transport. In an assessment of public transport accessibility, part two (regarding future capacity) and part three (regarding existing capacity) of the policy should be read as having equal weight in the decision making process.

When developers put forward large development proposals, it is important that the design is of an appropriate format and scale. The successful integration of the development into the existing shopping centre is fundamental to providing a scheme that will not only maintain the existing character of the area, but also add to the vitality and viability of the centre.

When considering large scale retail developments, the Council recognises that opportunities may exist for developing town centre sites that have not been identified within the Key Sites in Town Centres. Therefore the Council will consider assembling sites, either through redevelopment, or by assembling sites of sufficient size which are currently in a multiplicity of ownerships, through compulsory purchase where appropriate.
7.3 Designated Shopping Frontages

In all designated frontage any loss of shopping floorspace (A1), which serves the interests of shoppers, visitors and residents, will not normally be permitted.

The main function of a shopping centre is to provide for the retail needs of customers, however a proper balance is needed between shops and other services. The vitality of many shopping centres, particularly in smaller centres, would be threatened if prime shop-fronts were taken over by non-retail activities. By designating frontages it can be ensured that shopping centres retain a reasonable number of retail outlets.

Designated frontages are spread throughout the Borough, thus trying to ensure that all residential areas are not more than 400m from local shops. The success and justification of designated frontages is ensured by their regular review.

7.4 Non-Designated Shopping Frontages

1. In non-designated frontages, changes of use to non-retail uses will normally be acceptable where this does not have an adverse effect on retail activity or residential amenity, does not result in over-concentration of non-retail uses creating dead frontage, and provided that:

   (i) The proposed use contributes to the functions of the centre. Acceptable uses include financial and professional services (A2), food and drink uses (A3) and appropriate community facilities, though other uses may be considered favourably in frontages which are on the fringes of the centre;

   (ii) The Council is satisfied that there is no damage to the environment or amenity from noise, fumes, traffic, litter, refuse or general disturbance;

   (iii) A net loss of residential accommodation does not occur on upper floors.

2. Within Town and Neighbourhood Centres, residential accommodation will only be appropriate in units on the edge of non-designated frontages, adjacent to existing residential property, and where there is evidence of long term vacancy.
All shopping centres consist of more than just shops, and their accessibility makes them particularly useful for a range of activities serving the community; for example restaurants, libraries and financial services. In non-designated shopping frontages the Council may also accept a change of use which generates employment, community, cultural, tourist and recreation uses.

However not all non-retail uses are complementary to the viability and vitality of the shopping centre. If the growth of non-retail uses leads to an over-concentration of such units, there will be a reduction in the variety of shops available to customers, and this can result in the decline of the diversity and thus convenience of the centre. Over-concentration of non-retail uses will normally be considered to exist where there are more than three non-A1 units adjacent to each other in a frontage. Similarly, where there is a general absence of window displays, this can lead to an overall reduction in attractiveness of the centre for shoppers.

Where necessary, conditions will be attached to planning consents for non-retail uses, in order to minimise the amount of ‘dead frontage’, and to ensure that premises cannot change without planning permission, to non-retail uses which are inappropriate in a shopping parade.

It is recognised that residential uses can increase the vitality and viability of existing vacant frontages, and also meet the housing demand within the Borough. However such conversions need to be carefully considered, and if inappropriately located, residential units can actually harm and “deaden” the appearance of a centre. The Council therefore wishes to see conversions to residential units within Town and Neighbourhood Centres only taking place on the fringes of existing shopping frontages.

7.5 Basic Shopping Needs

The Council will resist the loss of existing shops where this would result in the surrounding area being more than 400 metres from the nearest occupied, operational retail shop.

Outside the town centres there are a number of single or small groups of shops, mainly in residential areas, which by ensuring local access, provide a very useful service to the surrounding community. These shops should remain in retail use if possible, particularly when there is only one unit within walking distance (400m). The Council will encourage the provision of such small scale shops providing basic shopping needs, in areas that have been identified as lacking local convenience shopping.

7.6 Eating, Drinking and Entertainment

1. When considering proposals for eating, drinking and entertainment uses (both new premises and extensions), the Council will have particular regard to the impact on amenity, and proposals will be considered in relation to the following criteria:

   (i) The concentration of eating, drinking and entertainment uses;
   (ii) The location of the proposal;
   (iii) The proximity of residential accommodation;
(iv) The preservation of the appearance and character of the area;
(v) The existing level of disturbance from eating, drinking and entertainment uses;
(vi) The negative impact from the proposed hours of operation;
(vii) The traffic implications including public transport accessibility;
(viii) The arrangements provided for any likely pollution, including ventilation equipment, refuse disposal (including customer litter), grease traps, and noise insulation.

2. Where considered necessary, when permission is given for the sale of food or drink for consumption on the premises, specific consent will be required for future use for the sale of hot food for consumption off the premises, if the proposal complies with all the criteria listed above.

3. Within Central Ealing, where applications for restaurants and cafes are consistent with the above criteria, the Council will normally restrict the proposal to that use, and require specific consent when a change of use is proposed to a pub or a club.

It is recognised that restaurants, cafes and pubs make a valuable contribution to the vitality of shopping centres, providing places for people to meet and enjoy themselves in the borough. Town Centres are considered to be the most appropriate location for this type of use, although the core area of retail uses (designated frontages) needs to be protected.

Whilst the provision of restaurants, cafes, takeaway, wine bars and public houses can add to the diversity and character of a centre, they can also cause a number of problems. The number of people, the amount of traffic generated, late opening hours, refuse and its collection, smells, noise (including that associated with patios and other outdoor licensed areas) and vibration (including from ventilation equipment), can disturb local residents and make the centre less attractive to other uses. It is therefore acknowledged from PPG6 that the cumulative effects of concentrations of particular uses, including impacts on residential amenity, is a factor that should be considered when making decisions.

Similarly when a change of use to A3 (restaurants, cafes, pubs or hot food takeaway) is being considered, not all premises in non-designated frontages are appropriate, especially where problems cannot be controlled by conditions. Where ventilation ducting to extract smells and fumes would cause harm to amenity, either visual or because the only equipment feasible does not cope adequately with the potential smells, they will be refused.

The Council will require that planning applications for shops, restaurants, and particularly takeaway food outlets, include adequate provision for the disposal of any litter generated and storage of refuse; also, where appropriate that the applicant includes facilities for collecting recyclable products sold at the premises.
Table 7B
Food and Drink Premises

Where changing from restaurants to hot food take-aways and other food and drink premises, the Council:

1. Will require appropriate measures to deal with any likely pollution, with full details of the external flue and extraction equipment to be submitted at the application stage. This should be designed to respect the character of the building, with internal ducting or stacks where possible within the existing building, and with regard to noise.

2. Permission will be refused for the use where proper external ventilation cannot be provided without harm to the air quality, visual appearance and amenity of the area, or where pedestrian movement or public transport is likely to be impeded.

7.7 Other Shopping Centre Uses

1. When considering other Shopping Centre uses the Council will normally refuse any change of use that:

   (i) Will have an adverse effect on neighbouring residential accommodation;
   (ii) Will cause disturbance in terms of noise, smells, fumes or other environmental damage;
   (iii) Will create adverse traffic impacts.

2. Amusement Centres will only be permitted provided that:

   (i) The proposal will not cause a detrimental impact to adjacent residential accommodation;
   (ii) The proposal is not located near to a school, youth facility, place of worship or hotel;
   (iii) The proposal would not be detrimental to a Conservation Conservation Area or other area of special architectural or historic interest it is within.

Within shopping centres there are some uses that whilst playing an important role, can cause particular environmental problems. It is therefore necessary to give careful consideration to where these uses should be located. Such uses include Laundrettes, Dry Cleaners and Veterinary Practices which whilst providing essential services, can cause problems including noise disturbance, odour and negative traffic impacts.

It is highlighted within PPG6 that amusement centres can give rise to particular planning concerns, especially regarding residential amenity, visual amenity and social matters.

Mini Cab offices and taxi businesses generally wish to locate in town centres, however because of the traffic congestion and other environmental problems they can cause, will be given special
consideration. The policy for this type of use and the background to issues around taxi services and how they will be dealt with, is set out in the Transport Chapter at Policy 9.2.2. 7.7-J3

7.8 Markets and Street Trading

1. The Council will support the existence of market stalls on appropriate sites in town centres.

2. When considering proposals for street markets the Council will have regard to the following criteria:

(i) Maintaining the vitality and viability of the existing town centre;
(ii) The minimisation of local environmental impacts, especially with regard to the amenities of nearby residents;
(iii) The impact on existing transport infrastructure, particularly parking and pedestrian flows;
(iv) The adequacy of the arrangements for access, servicing, recycling and refuse disposal.

Markets and street trading are an important part of retail services within the London Borough of Ealing. Their existence can add character, variety and economic diversity to a shopping centre, and may help to attract shoppers. Individual market stalls can provide a retail presence in areas of a centre that would otherwise be deficient of shops. 7.8-J1

Existing and proposed facilities are therefore encouraged where appropriate, particularly those which promote locally produced goods e.g. farmers or craft markets, and which endeavour to keep both the wider (e.g. organically produced goods) and local environmental impacts to a minimum, whilst maintaining the vibrancy, vitality and character of the local area. The existing transport infrastructure should be considered, particularly with regard to the effect on the existing parking and pedestrian flows. However the impact on public transport operations, especially buses, should also be taken into account. Appropriate sites for street markets can include temporarily vacant sites, and where suitable in the streets themselves, but individual stalls should only be located where they do not cause an obstruction or visual harm. 7.8-J2