

CHAPTER 5

Shopping and Retail Services

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CHAPTER 5

Shopping and Retail Services

Introduction

- 5.1 Southend is the principal shopping centre for the whole of South East Essex. Within its boundary are a wide variety of shopping facilities. These range from the town centre itself - a sub-regional centre providing a full range of goods and services for a catchment population of over 300,000 people - to the many small specialist and local shops found along main roads or in the heart of residential areas. In between are the important district centres of Hamlet Court Road and Leigh Broadway, together with a number of valuable local centres scattered throughout the Borough. These shops are important both as amenities for local residents and as a source of commerce and employment.
- 5.2 The social and economic investment represented by the town's shops is, therefore, substantial. However, retailing is constantly adapting to changing economic and social considerations, and further development and change must be expected - indeed it is necessary. The range and variety of shops and services will change, as they have always done, in response to changing conditions, but the continued success of established centres is important - and in some cases vital - to the economy, employment base and social amenities of the town. In a situation of increasing car ownership, shopper mobility and competition from new forms of shopping development, this success will depend upon the ability of such centres to develop, improve and adapt in response to the changing expectations and preferences of shoppers, the needs of the community and the requirements of retailers. This approach reflects the most recent government guidance which seeks to sustain or enhance the vitality and viability of town centres which serve the whole community, and to ensure the availability of a wide range of shopping opportunities to which people have easy access (Planning Policy Guidance Note 6 - Town Centres and Retail Developments, July 1993).

Retail Trends

- 5.3 In planning for future requirements and the development of the town's shopping facilities, it is necessary to make a distinction between two main types of provision:
- (i) "Food" shopping - those goods such as food, drink and household cleaning materials which are purchased regularly and frequently. The prime consideration is one of convenience - convenience of store location in relation to the home, convenience of access and parking. Such goods are therefore normally referred to as "convenience goods".
 - (ii) "Durable" shopping - those goods which are bought on an occasional or irregular basis only, for example clothes and furniture. The principal consideration here is the ability of the shopper to be able to compare prices, quality etc. between shops. For this reason, this kind of shopping is normally referred to as "comparison goods" shopping.
- 5.4 These two types of shop have increasingly different locational requirements. Convenience goods shops require plentiful ground level parking immediately adjacent to the store and easy access from the residential areas they serve. Comparison goods shops normally require extensive floorspace with a central location, preferably grouped together with other shops selling a range of comparison goods. Whilst good and convenient parking facilities are also important, it is only certain comparison goods shops - normally those selling "bulky" goods

-which require these to be at ground level. These differences are illustrated by the increasing movement of convenience goods shops out of town centres into large stores in new local shopping centres and other locations easily accessible to residential areas. North Shoebury and Eastwood are examples of local shopping centres based on large food stores in areas of population growth. At the same time, a number of supermarkets in Southend town centre have closed, to be replaced by comparison goods facilities. The sale of comparison goods remains the principal function of established central shopping areas.

- 5.5 In addition there are differences in the pattern of retail spending between these types of goods. This means that, in expenditure terms alone, their floorspace requirements will be different. Expenditure on convenience goods is growing slowly at the present time, with average annual spending per person increasing by only 0.3% between 1976 and 1989. Expenditure on comparison goods, on the other hand, grew by 4.6% per year over the same period, giving rise to a need for more floorspace to meet the needs of a given population. These trends are expected to continue, subject to short-term variations reflecting the cyclical nature of economic conditions, for the foreseeable future. Government advice as set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 6 (PPG6 - Town Centres and Retail Developments, July 1993) indicates that when preparing Local Plans local authorities should take account of the broad forecasts of retail demand and how the retail sector is likely to want to respond to that demand over the Plan period, by reference to location and type of retailing. This exercise has indicated both an immediate need for new convenience goods floorspace to serve specific parts of the Borough, with further scope for both convenience and comparison goods floorspace likely during the Plan period, particularly within the town centre.
- 5.6 Increased car ownership is one of many factors that have brought about a significant change in shopping habits over recent years. This period has seen the development of new forms of retail operation, in particular the rapid growth of new styles of off-centre shops - superstores and hypermarkets selling convenience goods, and "retail warehouses" selling bulky comparison goods such as furniture and DIY products. In addition, an increasing number of non-retail operators, for example Building Societies, are seeking premises within established shopping centres. A further trend now becoming apparent is the combination of shopping with entertainment, recreation and catering activities to create a more pleasant and enjoyable "leisure trip".
- 5.7 All these developments clearly have a role to play in extending choice in shopping, allowing more efficient retailing, enabling a better service to be given to the public, and making shopping more pleasant. Nevertheless the impact of such developments on the vitality, viability and attractiveness of established shopping centres can give rise to concern. The needs of those without the use of a car, for example the elderly, infirm or disabled, mothers with young children and those on lower incomes, must also continue to be catered for by easily accessible shops catering for a wide range of day-to-day needs among all sections of the community. These requirements can and should be met within established centres. In a climate of increasing competition between centres and forms of retailing, it is vital that existing centres become more attractive to shoppers if they are to compete effectively with other retail developments and provide a service to all sections of the community. This will require a wide range of modern, attractive shopping and related facilities, improvements to the shopping centre environment, and convenient access, parking and public transport.
- 5.8 This chapter seeks to establish policies and proposals which create an appropriate balance between providing a wide range of modern shopping facilities in a variety of locations convenient to all the town's residents, promoting the development, improvement and adaptation of established centres to ensure their continued vitality, viability and attractiveness, and safeguarding land required to meet other major land use needs in the Borough.

Objectives

(See Introduction Aim 3)

- 5.9
1. To provide for a wide range of modern, attractive shopping and related facilities to serve the retail needs of the Borough's residents and visitors.
 2. To concentrate retail development in the existing shopping centres and, where exceptionally permitted elsewhere, to ensure that such provision does not materially affect the character of the area and the vitality and viability of existing centres.
 3. To seek to ensure that new retail developments are accessible to all the town's residents, both car borne and those utilising public transport.
 4. To promote the development, improvement and adaptation of established shopping centres.
 5. To identify appropriate development opportunities and areas suitable for retail and commercial development, subject to the need to safeguard residential amenities.
 6. To identify primary and secondary shopping frontages whose principal function is one of retailing goods, and to limit the development of non-retail uses in order to maintain their character, variety and vitality.
 7. To safeguard land required to meet other major land use needs from inappropriate retail development.

Policy Context

- 5.10 The general policy context for retail development contained in the Essex Structure Plan First Alteration is to concentrate new shopping developments in existing centres but to permit retail development elsewhere in certain circumstances. This strategy is felt to be appropriate to Southend, given the limited increase in the level of population in the area and the substantial resources which are being, and should continue to be, invested in these centres for their development and modernisation. However, the Council accepts that, in the case of some types of development involving new forms of retailing, town centre locations are either inappropriate or cannot be provided. New shopping development will therefore be permitted where it satisfies the various considerations set out in Policy S1. In view of the very limited land resources now available in Southend for development, it will be vital to ensure that future shopping developments do not prejudice the provision of other major land use needs in the Borough, as identified in the Plan. This particularly applies to open space and to industrial and business land. The latter is in very short supply relative to development rates in recent years and Planning Policy Guidance Note 6 (PPG6 - Town Centres and Retail Developments, July 1993) states clearly that planning applications for retail development should not normally be allowed on land designated for other uses in an approved development plan, especially industrial land. Having regard to identified deficiencies in open space provision in the Borough (see Chapter 7), the Plan proposes significant new allocations and seeks to safeguard existing facilities, a strategy which is now supported by the provisions of Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17 - Sport and Recreation, September 1991).

Convenience Goods Shopping and Large New Stores

- 5.11 Several suburban foodstores at North Shoebury, Eastwood, Leigh, Hadleigh and Thundersley,

together with a large new foodstore within Southend town centre, have been developed during the 1980s (see Appendix 5, Table 10, page 204). The need for additional convenience floorspace over the Plan period must be considered in terms of both anticipated quantitative scope and qualitative deficiencies. Population growth within the Borough is likely to be limited and the most recent forecasts of expenditure growth on convenience goods provided by the Unit for Retail Planning Information (URPI), indicate a medium to long-term average annual growth rate of only 0.3%. Taken together with known floorspace changes in the Borough since 1986 - which include both gains and losses - this suggests that there may be quantitative scope for additional convenience goods floorspace during the remainder of the plan period of the order of 3,000 square metres (net). Such calculations take no account, however, of any increased expenditure from workers and other visitors to the town, including shoppers from adjoining Districts, nor do they take account of further changes to existing facilities as outdated floorspace closes in favour of new and better quality facilities elsewhere. In practical terms, therefore, it is appropriate to plan for a higher level of 'new' floorspace than the above calculations suggest, particularly where this would result in qualitative improvements to the facilities available to the town's residents. It is therefore likely that there will be quantitative scope for at least two new large modern food stores in the Borough during the Plan period.

- 5.12 The need for such additional floorspace is reinforced by current indications that the existing first order food stores in the Borough - providing a full range of convenience goods plus a limited range of comparison goods and plentiful car parking - are trading at very high levels. These stores clearly represent high quality, attractive shopping facilities. Such facilities are, however, currently limited to the town centre and North Shoebury. In qualitative terms there is a need for additional high-quality foodstores to serve both the northern and western parts of the Borough.
- 5.13 Additionally, it is appropriate to encourage increases in convenience goods floorspace in existing, long established centres, in accordance with the retail strategy and advice contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note 6 (PPG6 - Town Centres and Retail Developments, July 1993). Changing retail patterns have shifted food spending away from existing centres. This has had a significant effect on the level of convenience shopping floorspace and customer choice in these centres, where remaining stores tend to have limited floorspace and parking facilities, offering a less attractive level of service to the shopper. Improved convenience goods facilities in established centres would assist adaptation and modernisation, thereby helping them to offer an improved shopping environment, meet the needs of the non-car-borne shopper and compete effectively with retail development elsewhere.
- 5.14 There is no scope, however, for providing further 'first order' facilities within these centres. The site requirements for large new stores would be difficult to accommodate satisfactorily within the densely developed urban areas of the town. Proposals are therefore made in the Plan for two new convenience superstores on land north of Eastern Avenue to the west of the Wellesley Hospital (Proposal P5e, page 97), which would involve the relocation of existing playing fields (see Proposal P7f, page 124), and on land north of Prince Avenue adjacent to the proposed B1013/A127 link road (Proposal P5f, page 98).

Retail Warehousing

- 5.15 Recent years have seen a rapid growth in the number of retail warehouse facilities in and around Southend. Within the Borough itself, there are seven stores providing over 16,000m² (gross) of floorspace in four locations, including a purpose-built retail warehouse park. Elsewhere in the catchment area there is now a further 28,000m² (gross) at 12 stores in

Rochford, Thundersley and Benfleet (see Appendix 5, Table 11, page 206). In addition, two new retail warehouse parks providing a total of 48,000m² are now open in Basildon, close to the A127, and within reach of many Southend residents.

- 5.16 From the retailers' point of view, retail warehouses offer spacious, single-storey premises at a low rental. This in turn allows them to offer lower prices, more spacious display areas, greater choice and convenient parking. As a result, they are felt to be appropriate for the display and sale of bulky goods, such as furniture and DIY products, for which established shopping centres with their relatively high rental levels, limited display areas and restricted parking facilities are often not suitable.
- 5.17 On the other hand, both local planning authorities and retailers in established centres are concerned that such developments could attract shoppers and retailers away from these centres, thereby undermining their economic vitality. In addition, the location of retail warehouses on industrial estates or on sites which could appropriately be used for industrial or commercial purposes uses up land which may be valuable in meeting an area's future employment requirements. This applies particularly to Southend, where there is a shortage of such land and a requirement to make additional allocations for the future, within a context of very limited land availability for further development.
- 5.18 Southend has been fortunate in that the town has been able to secure retail warehouse development in locations - usually edge of centre locations - which complement rather than compete with established shopping facilities and which do not occupy land which is valuable to its industrial and business needs. In view of the substantial provision already made, the limited land available in the town, and the competing needs for this land, it is considered that this approach should continue to be pursued in accordance with the general retail strategy and considerations set out in Policy S1 below.

New Shopping Developments

- 5.19 Any new proposal for retail development needs to be assessed against a range of criteria to ensure that the development can be satisfactorily accommodated. This is particularly the case with large developments which may have an impact on existing shopping centres, the highway network and local amenities, as well as on other policies and proposals in the Plan. Having regard to the general retail strategy and other considerations set out above, the following policy will apply to all retail development proposals:

POLICY S1 - NEW SHOPPING DEVELOPMENTS

Retail development will normally be concentrated in the Borough's existing shopping centres, which will be maintained and enhanced in order to ensure their continued vitality and attractiveness to shoppers. Such development may exceptionally be permitted elsewhere within the built-up area of the town*¹ to allow for new forms of retailing, in particular large modern retail stores which are not appropriate to or cannot satisfactorily be accommodated within existing centres.

All proposals for retail development (including extensions to existing premises and changes of use) will be required to satisfy the following criteria:

- (i) **they should not, either individually or cumulatively with other recent or proposed developments, materially affect the vitality and viability of any defined*² shopping centre as a whole;**
- (ii) **they should not materially prejudice the provision of other major land use needs in the Borough, particularly the supply of land for open space and employment. Proposals should be considered against the provisions of Policies C15 and E4;**
- (iii) **they should be accessible to both car borne shoppers and those using public transport;**
- (iv) **they should not give rise to serious problems of access, road safety or traffic congestion;**
- (v) **they should provide adequate car parking and servicing arrangements, and the Borough Council will have regard in particular to Policies T11 and T12 in assessing this; and**
- (vi) **they should not materially harm the visual character of the area or the amenities of adjoining land uses, in accordance with Policies C11 and E5.**

*¹ See Appendix 9 - Definition of Terms Used

*² 'Defined Shopping Centres' include only the following centres (defined more precisely on the Proposals Map) - Southend Town Centre, Westcliff (Hamlet Court Road), Leigh (Broadway), Eastwood (Western Approaches) and North Shoebury.

Policy Cross References : C11 New Buildings, Extensions and Alterations, page 30; C15 Retention of Open Spaces, page 33; E4 Industry and Warehousing, page 73, E5 Non-Residential Uses Located Close to Housing, page 74; T11 Parking Standards, page 155; and T12 Servicing Facilities, page 155.

Southend Town Centre

- 5.20 1987/88 saw a significant expansion of comparison goods floorspace in the town, mainly within and around Southend town centre. The majority of this new floorspace is located in "The Royals", Southend's first enclosed, climate-controlled shopping centre; the Greyhound Shopping Park in Sutton Road; and in other retail warehouse developments on the edge of the town centre. These new developments have met the immediate need for new floorspace in the town centre arising from expenditure growth in the catchment area. Although this does not preclude further development to achieve qualitative improvement, a period of consolidation is now required, to enable this new floorspace to become established within a centre which continues to be viable, lively and attractive. In addition, some earlier shopping developments would benefit from improvement or refurbishment, in particular the Victoria Circus centre, an early example of a pedestrianised shopping facility which now compares unfavourably with "The Royals". A period of consolidation would facilitate this.
- 5.21 Nevertheless, expenditure per head of the population on comparison goods will continue to rise in the medium to long-term. This will result in a need for some increase in the amount

of floorspace devoted to the sale of such goods, particularly during the mid to late 1990's. Current estimates suggest that, during the 1990's, increased consumer expenditure will give rise to a need for between 20,000 and 30,000 square metres (215-320,000 square feet) of net retail floorspace in this centre. These estimates are, however, dependent upon assumptions with regard to the actual level of growth in expenditure, the level of efficiency of existing and new floorspace and the proportion of total catchment area expenditure attracted to the town centre. Nevertheless, it is clear that, if Southend town centre is to improve as a shopping centre and is to remain competitive with other sub-regional centres, new shopping facilities must be provided, both to expand the range of goods and services offered and to extend the provision of modern, attractive facilities in a high quality environment.

- 5.22 Until the development of "The Royals" shopping centre, the majority of improvements to both the attractiveness and accessibility of the central area had been made to its northern half. It took many years for the Council to secure an appropriate scheme for "The Royals" site in order to redress the imbalance between north and south. It is important that this initiative is not lost, particularly as other recent retail developments have all been in the northern part of the centre. In addition, retail development must be contained within the Central Business District in order to meet the Council's objective of safeguarding and enhancing the environment of those residential areas which adjoin the town centre. However, the Seaway Car Park, located just outside the Central Business District, which currently provides surface level parking, may offer the opportunity for a well designed retail facility subject to replacement public car parking in a decked or multi-storey format (see Proposal P9k, page 159). Specific proposals for future retail development are therefore made in this Plan on three sites in the central and southern parts of the shopping centre, together with the former Municipal College site at the northern end, to meet these considerations. The redevelopment of the area between Tylers Avenue and York Road (P5c, page 97) in particular, offers an opportunity to provide traffic and environmental improvements as well as to reinforce the shopping and parking facilities available at "The Royals".

Southend town centre: a spacious and attractive shopping centre. The buildings to the right of the photograph form part of a 'Frontage of Townscape Merit' (see pages 26 and 165).

- 5.23 The loss of convenience goods shopping facilities from existing centres referred to in paragraph 5.13 above has particularly affected the town centre, where the recently developed London Road store is the only general purpose food supermarket operating. It is supplemented by other smaller and more specialised convenience goods facilities (e.g. Marks & Spencer's food hall and Iceland) but a qualitative deficiency remains, affecting in particular the central and southern parts of the centre and their surrounding residential areas. New facilities will therefore be positively promoted to overcome this deficiency, and the Council will seek to create the right conditions to meet the locational requirements for new food floorspace.

POLICY S2 - SOUTHEND TOWN CENTRE

The Borough Council will seek to secure the provision of additional floorspace devoted to the sale of both comparison and convenience goods in the town centre in accordance with the considerations set out in Policy S1.

In order to safeguard and improve the environment of housing areas adjoining the Central Business District, in accordance with Policy H12, and to promote the comprehensive development of currently under-used sites within the town centre, such provision will normally be directed to Proposals Sites P5a, P5b, P5c and P5d identified on the Proposals Map as suitable for retail use and to the redevelopment or conversion of premises located in existing shopping frontages. In addition, permission may be granted for additional retail floorspace on Proposal Site P9k in association with replacement public parking.

All additional floorspace in the town centre will be required to provide modern, attractive facilities in a high standard of shopper environment, including wherever appropriate the provision of enclosed, climate-controlled shopping.

Policy Cross References : H12 Environmental Improvement of Residential Areas, page 61; S1 New Shopping Developments, page 85; Proposals P5a (Former Municipal College Site, London Road), P5b (Warrior Square and Whitegate Road), P5c (Tylers Avenue and York Road) and P5d (Alexandra Street, High Street and Market Place), pages 96 and 07; and Proposal P9k (Seaway Car Park), page 159.

Large Shopping Developments

- 5.24 Under present town planning legislation, no distinction is made between convenience goods shops and comparison goods shops, both falling within Class A1 of the 1987 Use Classes Order.* It would normally be possible for a large comparison goods store to change to a convenience goods store, in possible conflict with the considerations set out in Policy S1 above, without the need for planning permission. In order to avoid this potential difficulty with any major new comparison goods retail proposal, the following policy will apply:

POLICY S3 - LARGE SHOPPING DEVELOPMENTS

Any planning permission granted for retail development having a net (sales) floorspace in excess of 500 square metres will normally be restricted by a condition prohibiting the use of the premises for the sale of convenience goods. The Borough Council may also seek a legal agreement restricting the type of goods sold before granting permission.

Retail Markets

- 5.25 Retail markets have long been a popular form of secondary shopping and were traditionally held at the centre of towns, providing a lively meeting place for residents from surrounding areas. It is perhaps unfortunate that the location of Southend's principal open market, at Roots Hall, is some way outside the town centre. A recent open market held on land adjoining Central Station provided only a temporary facility, pending long-term redevelopment of the site. Although York Road provides a related covered market facility, the shopping centre would benefit from a single, permanently based central market.

POLICY S4 - RETAIL MARKETS

The Borough Council will promote the establishment of a permanently based retail market within the Central Business District of Southend Town Centre, Applications for such development elsewhere will be considered on their individual merits, having regard to Policy S1

Policy Cross Reference : S1 New Shopping Developments, page 85

Non-Retail Uses

- 5.26 Considerable concern has for some time been expressed regarding the proliferation of non-retail service outlets in the town's principal shopping centres, for example banks, building society offices, estate agents, insurance brokers and employment agencies. Concern arises because of the "dead" frontage which these uses can create, particularly through the lack of a proper shop window display. This can reduce the attractiveness of the street to shoppers or isolate particular shops or areas from the main pedestrian flows.
- 5.27 On the other hand, there is a role for certain non-retail services in shopping centres, in particular banks, building societies and public consumer services such as Job Centres. Such services can be complementary to shopping and appropriate under certain conditions for inclusion even within primary frontages. A proportion of these outlets can add an extra dimension to a shopping centre, increasing its viability, effectiveness and general attractiveness to the public. Planning Policy Guidance Note 6 (PPG6 - Town Centres and Retail Developments, July 1993) states that variety and activity are essential elements of the vitality and viability of town centres. As well as entertainment facilities, restaurants and cafes, local branches of banks and other financial institutions offering services to the public can be well located in town centres. They should not, however, be allowed to dominate primary shopping areas in a way which undermines the retail function.
- 5.28 The determining issue is whether such uses are too numerous or too concentrated in relation to the surrounding shopping area. If the proportion of any frontage devoted to retail use remains above 75-80%, it is unlikely that difficulties will be caused. If the proportion of retail uses drops below this, however, or if "wedges" of non-retail outlets are created - a continuous run of three or more single units or equivalent - then a significant break in the continuity of shopping frontage results, especially if other shops are separated from the rest of the centre. Any policy needs, however, to incorporate more detailed levels of control to take account of the differing levels of importance and sensitivity of different centres. Whilst primary frontages may need to be restricted to a high proportion of retail uses, there should be scope for more flexibility of use in secondary frontages. It is in these areas where diversification has most to contribute.

- 5.29 Similar arguments apply to "catering" uses such as restaurants and cafes. They can add variety and activity to a shopping centre, especially in the evenings. On the other hand, "dead" frontage can be created during normal shopping hours. The policy set out below seeks to make some provision for appropriate service and catering uses in the town's shopping areas; to restrict the overall number of such uses to a level appropriate to each centre; and to ensure that those uses which are permitted are dispersed throughout the centre and are thereby integrated into the shopping environment, enabling the dominant retail element and continuity of shopping frontages to be maintained and the isolation of other shops to be avoided. Proposals involving small groups of shops not identified on the Proposals Map will be considered on their merits having regard to the extent to which the present retail use serves local needs.

POLICY S5 - NON-RETAIL USES

Primary Shopping Frontages (as defined on the Proposals Map)

The Borough Council recognises the contribution which certain non-retail uses can make to the attraction of shopping centres. However, in order to safeguard Primary Shopping Frontages from undue interruption to their principal function of retailing goods and to maintain their character and vitality, permission will normally only be granted where:

- (i) the proposed use is appropriate to a Primary Shopping Area and falls within Classes A2 or A3 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987*;**
- (ii) non-retail uses remain dispersed throughout the shopping centre and no concentration of such uses would occur in any part of it;**
- (iii) the dominant retail element and continuity of shopping frontages with varied and changing window displays are maintained throughout all parts of the centre;**
- (iv) other shops would not be isolated from the bulk of the shopping frontage or from the main pedestrian flows.**

In assessing whether these criteria are satisfied, the Council will have regard to the type of shopping centre, the location of the premises within the centre, the number of non-retail units in the vicinity and in the centre as a whole, the proportion of frontage occupied by them, and the known views of shoppers and traders in the centre.

Permission will not normally be granted where proposals would result in:

- (i) more than two single non-retail units (or equivalent) being located immediately adjacent to each other; or**

- (ii) the proportion of frontage (measured in terms of length of frontage) remaining in retail use falling below 80% within either the individual street block or the centre as a whole; or
- (iii) residential amenities being adversely affected by way of noise, disturbance or the emission of smells and fumes.

Where, however, a proposed use falls within Class A3 and is likely to sustain or increase the activity, interest and attractiveness of a shopping area, the Council may consider relaxing the limits set out in (i) and (ii) above, subject to a condition prohibiting a change to Class A2 use.

Proposals for non-retail uses involving the redevelopment of premises already containing such uses will normally be acceptable, but any increase in non-retail frontage resulting from redevelopment will be considered against the above criteria and considerations.

Secondary Shopping Frontages (as defined on the Proposals Map)

Subject to the provisions of Policy S9 there will generally be no discrimination between shops and non-retail uses falling within Classes A2 and A3 of the Use Classes Order, except where this would be likely to isolate other shops from the bulk of the shopping frontage or from the main pedestrian flows, would adversely affect residential amenities by way of noise, disturbance or the emission of smells and fumes, or in cases of small local parades or individual units performing an essential retail function for the local community. Other uses will be considered on their individual merits.

Other Shopping Frontages

In the case of isolated shopping frontages not identified on the Proposals Map, proposals involving the loss of retail uses will be considered on their individual merits. Where the existing use is providing for the shopping needs of the local community its loss will not normally be permitted.

General (All Categories)

- (i) All uses permitted will be required to retain a shop front with a shop window containing a display or otherwise treated to the satisfaction of the Borough Council.
- (ii) Conditions may also be imposed prohibiting a change to a particular use or uses within the same Use Class or permitted by the General Development Order 1988 where this is considered necessary to prevent serious adverse effects on the environment or on amenity.

- (iii) **Permissions for development falling within Class A3 of the Use Classes Order 1987 will also be subject to a condition requiring the installation of extraction equipment to the satisfaction of the Borough Council. Such uses are regarded as being appropriate only within established shopping areas, and applications for such uses elsewhere will normally be refused in order to safeguard residential amenities.**
- (iv) **Amusement centres and arcades will not normally be permitted in any shopping area and will be required to locate within the Central Seafront Area.**
- * **Class A2 and A3 uses, together with the term ‘street block’ are defined in Appendix 9.**
- Note: With regard to Class A2 and A3 uses, in assessing whether a proposed use meets the definition in the policy, the Borough Council will have regard to the degree of “walk in” service provided to visiting members of the public and the contribution made by the elevational treatment to the character of the shopping centre and the continuity of shopping frontage. Only those uses providing a substantial element of direct service to the general public justifying a shopping street location will be permitted. Uses such as accountants’ and solicitors’ offices will not normally be regarded as acceptable.**

Fringe Commercial Areas

- 5.30 In addition to the primary and secondary shopping and office frontages, there are a number of areas in the Borough which provide suitable locations for general commercial development comprising a mix of retail, small offices and car sales operations. These generally occur along the London Road and Southchurch Road and are delineated on the Proposals Map as Fringe Commercial Areas. Such areas form an important additional source of local employment and business, and proposals for commercial development will be considered appropriate at ground floor level in these locations, and may additionally be permitted above ground floor level, provided that they would not harm the amenities of adjoining residents and include appropriate car parking and servicing facilities. Because of their significant environmental and highway implications, proposals for car sales and showroom operations will be subject to particular development controls (see Policy S7 below). Floorspace above ground floor level in fringe commercial areas is also considered to be appropriate for housing purposes as a contribution to the provision of low cost housing, in accordance with Policy H2 (Chapter 2, page 47), subject to the suitability of the building for such a use.

POLICY S6 - FRINGE COMMERCIAL AREAS

Commercial development proposals at ground floor level within Fringe Commercial Areas, as delineated on the Proposals Map will normally be permitted, and may also be considered appropriate above ground floor level, except where this would result in an unacceptable impact on or loss of residential amenities and subject to the provision of appropriate car parking and servicing

Facilities and the requirements of Policies H4, E5 and S7 (see also Policies H2 and E3).

Policy Cross References : H2 Future Housing Needs, page 47; H4 Preservation of Residential Uses, page 49; E3 Secondary Offices, page 70; E5 Non-Residential Uses Located Close to Housing, page 74; and S7 Car Sales and Showrooms (see below).

Car Sales and Showrooms

- 5.31 The majority of car showrooms in the Borough are located along the A13 (London Road/Southchurch Road) and adjoining commercial frontages. Their growth appears to be a natural evolutionary phase in the function of these roads, reflecting their semi-commercial nature but declining retail function, coupled with increasing levels of car ownership and mobility. Nevertheless, significant highway and environmental problems frequently occur. The nature of the use demands a relatively high level of floorspace, not only for the display and sale of vehicles but also for their prior storage and preparation and the parking of customers' vehicles. Where insufficient space is available, these activities can spill out onto the highway and adjoining residential streets. In addition, a high concentration of showrooms or open sales areas may be unattractive to the street scene, whilst vehicle preparation may involve processes intrusive to neighbouring development.
- 5.32 The following policy will therefore be operated by the Borough Council in addition to other policies contained in this Plan:

POLICY S7 - CAR SALES AND SHOWROOMS

Car showrooms will normally be permitted only within areas shown as Fringe Commercial Areas on the Proposals Map where the Council is satisfied that:

- (i) adequate space is available for the display and sale of vehicles, their separate storage and preparation, and the parking of customers' vehicles. In the light of this, the use of single shop units or their equivalent as car showrooms will not normally be permitted;**
- (ii) the proposal would not be harmful to the street scene and local environmental conditions through the creation of an undue concentration of such uses or through its visual impact;**
- (iii) adequate separation and screening from neighbouring development is provided, particularly with regard to rear yards and preparation areas, where a minimum 2 metre high wall or fence will normally be required. The use of return frontages for the storage, preparation or display of vehicles will not normally be permitted.**

Applications for such development will not be permitted within Primary or Secondary Shopping Frontages or the Central Business District.

Permission will not normally be granted for new or extended open sales areas (see also Policy C18).

Policy Cross Reference : C18 Open Sites Used for Commercial Purposes, page 36.

Shopping Centre Development and Improvement

- 5.33 The Council has been aware of the need to improve the environment for shoppers for many years. The success of its continuing programme of pedestrianisation of Southend High Street bears witness to the value of such improvement. The opportunities which shoppers now have to choose between centres make it essential that Southend is able to provide high quality, attractive facilities. Having established the general policy background for shopping in this Plan, the Council will examine the need and scope for such improvement in individual centres in future plans. Current financial controls may limit the Council's ability to carry out improvements itself. Nevertheless, it is considered essential that a firm commitment is established at the outset. The Council will, therefore, work closely with private sector interests to promote the improvement and modernisation of the town's shopping centres. Proposals within these centres which do not contribute to such improvement will be resisted.
- 5.34 The first priority will be to secure further segregation of traffic and pedestrians in Southend town centre, in particular in that section of High Street between Weston Road and Clarence Street currently used as a one-way servicing loop for premises without rear access. Full pedestrianisation of this section of the High Street will require vehicle turning facilities in both side roads (see Proposal P9f - Chapter 9, page 159) and in the longer-term a rear service area to premises on the west side of the High Street. Rear access is dependent upon re-development which, in view of the high density of existing development, is unlikely to yield additional floorspace.
- 5.35 Opportunities for extending existing pedestrian areas elsewhere in the town centre will continue to be considered by the Council. There are proposals in this Chapter (Proposal P5a, page 96) and in Chapter 9 (Proposals P9a and P9b, page 159) to extend the High Street precinct at the eastern end of London Road and Queens Road. In addition, the feasibility of roofing over all or part of the High Street and the Victoria Circus shopping centre will be explored in order to afford shoppers a more comfortable and attractive shopping environment. Modern technology may thus provide a method of further up-grading the attraction of the primary shopping area without recourse to extensive rebuilding.
- 5.36 Elsewhere, the district centres of Hamlet Court Road and Leigh Broadway, as well as a number of important local centres, suffer from inadequate off-street parking facilities and from conflict between pedestrians and vehicles.
- 5.37 In addition to seeking improvements to the shopping environment, the Borough Plan aims to encourage the utilisation of suitable areas of vacant and under utilised floorspace above shops and commercial premises for housing purposes (see Policy H2, Chapter 3, page 47). This will not only provide much needed low-cost housing but is a critical element in restoring and generating new life in shopping areas.

POLICY S8 - IMPROVEMENTS TO PRIMARY SHOPPING FRONTAGES

The Borough Council will actively explore the opportunities for improving the quality of shopping environment in the town's Primary Shopping Frontages which would be provided by:

- (i) extending existing pedestrian areas within the town centre to provide a continuous traffic free precinct as indicated on the Proposals Map (see Proposals P5a, P9a, P9b and P9f);**
- (ii) roofing over appropriate parts of the High Street and the refurbishment and enclosure of the Victoria Circus Shopping Centre;**
- (iii) providing increased car parking and reduced conflict between pedestrians and vehicles in the following centres:**
 - Southend Town Centre**
 - Hamlet Court Road, Westcliff**
 - Broadway, Leigh (including related parts of Elm Road and Rectory Grove)**
 - West Road, Shoebury**
 - Thorpe Bay Broadway**
- (iv) co-ordinating the design and location of new pedestrian facilities; and**
- (v) providing additional areas of open space and planting within or adjacent to the primary frontages.**

Where necessary, the Council will work in association with the private sector to achieve such improvement through new development or re-development.

Applications which do not contribute to or which prejudice opportunities for improvement of the shopping environment will normally be refused. All development proposals will be required to provide or safeguard adequate off-street servicing facilities (see also Policies C6, C7, C8, C11, C13 and C14).

Policy Cross References : C6 Frontages of Townscape Merit, page 26; C7 Shop and Commercial Frontages and Fascias, page 27; C8 Advertisements, page 28; C11 New Buildings, Extensions and Alterations, page 30; C13 Street Furniture, page 32; C14 Trees, Planted Areas and Landscaping, page 33; Proposals P5a (Former Municipal College Site, London Road), page 96; and Proposals P9a (Queens Road, Southend-on-Sea), P9b (London Road) and P9f (Southend High Street), page 159.

- 5.39 Many secondary shopping frontages provide a valuable local service, either as day-to-day "top-up" shopping facilities for the surrounding catchment area or as specialist facilities supporting the primary frontages in the main centres. Certain side streets in the town centre, for example, such as Alexandra Street and the eastern end of Queens Road, provide an interesting grouping of small specialist shops, restaurants, offices and leisure uses. Premises in secondary shopping frontages therefore contribute to the overall attraction and variety of the town's shopping facilities and its main centres. Any significant decline in their numbers, or the loss of the character of these frontages, could be detrimental to the future competitiveness of such facilities and to the availability of shops for local residents. A particular problem in this respect is being experienced in Shoeburyness High Street.

POLICY S9 - RETENTION OF SECONDARY SHOPPING FRONTAGES

The Borough Council will seek to protect and enhance the character and value of Secondary Shopping Frontages where these can be shown to contribute to the retail attraction of the town or provide a valuable local service. Proposals to convert or redevelop properties on the east side of Shoeburyness High Street between Rampart Street and Gunners Road which involve the loss of a retail or restaurant use (Classes A1 and A3*) will not normally be permitted. (See also Policy S5).

Policy Cross Reference : S5 Non-Retail Uses, page 90.

Proposals

- 5.39 In order to give effect to the policies contained in this chapter, the following specific proposals, as indicated on the Proposals Map, are made:

PROPOSAL P5a - FORMER MUNICIPAL COLLEGE SITE, LONDON ROAD (see Town Centre Inset Map)

This key site lies between the Victoria Circus shopping centre and the recently completed supermarket in London Road. Additional shopping frontage is therefore proposed to create an appropriate link and to complement the improvement of the Victoria Circus centre. The site is also important visually, defining the northern end of the High Street shopping area and fronting Victoria Circus. Development will therefore be required to provide ground floor shopping frontage around an attractively laid-out town square and appropriate pedestrian and visual links with the Victoria Circus centre and development in London Road (see Proposal P9b, page 159). Office floorspace or other uses appropriate to a town centre situation, providing additional height to define the northern end of the High Street will also be required. A building of between five and eight floors above ground level would be preferred. In furtherance of these objectives, outline planning permission was granted in June 1992 for the development of a multi-screen cinema complex (2,000 seats) with shopping units on the ground floor frontage to London Road and offices above. The site area, including part of London Road, is 0.9 hectares and is defined more precisely on the Proposals Map.

PROPOSAL P5b - WARRIOR SQUARE (SOUTH SIDE) AND WHITEGATE ROAD (NORTH SIDE) (see Town Centre Inset Map)

Significant environmental improvements to Warrior Square could be achieved with the redevelopment of this site, which is allocated for retail development in accordance with Policy S2 (Southend Town Centre, see page 88) and additional public car parking (short stay). Vehicular access would be via a widened Whitegate Road with two-way working (see Proposal P9d - Chapter 9, page 159). Up to 5,000m² of retail space could be accommodated with multi-level parking. A mixed use development including other employment-generating activities such as offices or a hotel would be considered by the Council subject to the design being sympathetic to the designation of Warrior Square as a Conservation Area. An element of housing may be acceptable on the Warrior Square frontage as part of a comprehensive scheme. Pedestrianisation of part of the existing highway in Warrior Square (see Proposal P9c - Chapter 9, page 159) will be required as part of any development. Building will be limited to a maximum of four floors in order to relate well with existing property in the square. The inclusion of Warrior Square Pools within the site would only be considered by the Council if satisfactory alternative swimming facilities were provided in an appropriate

location. The eastern end of the site could be considered for housing development. Total site area is approximately 1.9 hectares including that part of Warrior Square to be pedestrianised.

PROPOSAL P5c - TYLERS AVENUE AND YORK ROAD (see Town Centre Inset Map)

This site which comprises approximately 1.7 hectares encompasses part of Chichester Road and Central Bus Station in addition to Tylers Avenue car park and adjoining properties in York Road, in order to ensure that future redevelopment proposals fully consider the opportunities for improving the alignment of Chichester Road and for extending the present bus station. The Council has identified part of this site as the most appropriate location for a further multi-storey car park to serve shoppers and other visitors to the centre. In accordance with Policy T11 (Parking Standards, page 155) part of this provision will be required as an element in any commercial redevelopment of this site, but additional parking spaces may be financed by a contribution from the Borough Council. In addition to replacement public parking and a bus station, it is estimated that up to 7,000m² of shopping floorspace could be provided. It is unlikely to be required before 1996, and in view of the number of land ownerships involved is regarded as a long-term development site. It could include office floorspace and a covered market, in accordance with Policy S4 (Retail Markets, page 89), as a replacement for York Road and Central Station markets. Vehicular access will be permitted only from Chichester Road.

PROPOSAL P5d - ALEXANDRA STREET, HIGH STREET AND MARKET PLACE (see Town Centre Inset Map)

This site is currently occupied by a public car park and a number of small retail/commercial units. However, it is considered that it has redevelopment potential to provide more modern retail facilities, with office floorspace over. It has provision for servicing in Royal Mews and is located directly opposite the pedestrian mall entrance in the Royals. An opportunity exists, therefore, to expand existing floorspace and increase retail efficiency. It is estimated that the site, which comprises approximately 0.5 hectares, could support up to 3,000m² of retail floorspace with basement or rooftop car parking. The Council will also encourage the refurbishment of premises adjoining in Royal Mews.

In the light of the recommendations of the Inspector who conducted the Public Inquiry into the Local Plan in March 1992, the Borough Council resolved to grant outline planning permission in October 1992 for retail development with associated petrol filling station and car parking facilities on the following two Proposal sites, subject to the completion of legal agreements relating to highway and landscaping works, and the following considerations. Detailed planning permission in respect of Proposal P5e was granted in September 1993.

PROPOSAL P5e - LAND NORTH OF EASTERN AVENUE

An area of approximately 5.0 hectares on the north side of Eastern Avenue, currently comprising the Youth Commemoration Ground and adjoining land, and defined more precisely on the Proposals Map, is proposed for a new food superstore. Development of the site will be dependent upon the parallel implementation of replacement public open space on land to the north of Eastern Avenue adjoining the Francis Sports Ground (Proposal P7f, page 124), providing modern purpose-built playing-fields together with a new pavilion and associated car parking. It will also be subject to the implementation of appropriate improvements to the existing highway network which both provide adequate access to the proposal, including a new junction on Eastern Avenue (see Proposal P9m, page 160), and safeguard the environment of residential roads to the south. The development will also be required to safeguard and provide improved public access to the Fossetts Camp Ancient Monument to the north. Extensive planting will be required both within and around the site to ensure that the proposals are well integrated into the landscape and have a satisfactory relationship with adjoining land and the Ancient Monument (see also paragraph 9.3 - Chapter 9, page 139).

PROPOSAL P5f - LAND NORTH OF PRINCE AVENUE

Approximately 4.0 hectares of agricultural land containing one residential property to the north of Prince Avenue and west of industrial premises in Prince Close, as defined more precisely on the Proposals Map, is proposed for a new food superstore with associated petrol filling station. Development of the site will be dependent upon the implementation of all those elements of the proposed B1013 Access to Southend Scheme south of Eastwoodbury Lane and junction improvements at the Bell and Kent Elms Corner on the A127.