southend on sea
BOROUGH COUNCIL

The Management of Designated Shopping Frontages in Southend-on-Sea - Technical Report

October 2013

Technical Report – The Management of Designated Shopping Frontages in Southend-on-Sea (October 2013)

1. Introduction

1.1 This report has been written as a technical paper to appraise and further evidence the emerging approach to managing primary and secondary shopping frontages in the Borough of Southend-on-Sea, which is being progressed by the Development Management Development Plan Document (DPD) and the Southend Central Area Action Plan (SCAAP).

1.2 The current approach to managing designated shopping frontages in Southend is set out by saved Policy S5 of the Local Plan (1994).

1.3 Proposed Policy DS2 of the SCAAP, which refers to Town Centre Primary Shopping Frontages, and Proposed Policy DM14[1] of the Development Management DPD, which applies to designated frontages outside of the town centre, once adopted will collectively replace policy S5 and provide the new definitive approach to managing both primary and secondary shopping frontages across the borough.

1.4 These emerging shop front polices have been informed by the Southend Town Centre and Retail Study (2011), the Southend Core Strategy (2007), national policy and guidance, consultation responses and sustainability appraisal. The Development Management DPD and SCAAP along with their associated evidence base can be viewed on the Southend Borough Council's (the Council's) website via the relevant planning pages: http://www.southend.gov.uk/

[1] Please note; 'Policy DM14: Shopping Frontage Management' is likely to be renamed to 'Policy DM13: Shopping Frontage Management outside the Town Centre'' in the forthcoming Revised Proposed-Submission Development Management DPD.

2. Purpose of Report

2.1 The primary objective of this report is to present the findings of a retail survey carried out for each Primary Shopping Frontage Area in the Borough.

The retail survey was carried out for each Primary Shopping Frontage Area (PSF Area) in February 2013.[2] The use class[3] of each unit was recorded together with the number and location of vacant units within each frontage area.

A commentary on the results to the survey is outlined herein. Comparison is also made between:

a. the Primary Shopping Frontage (Primary Frontage) as currently defined by the Local Plan (1994) and accompanying Proposal Map; and
b. those proposed amendments to these designations being brought forward by the emerging SCAAP and Development Management DPD.

2.2 The report also further examines the appropriateness and extent of Secondary Shopping Frontages (Secondary Frontage) within the Borough, which are also being progressed in the Development Management DPD and SCAAP. The secondary frontages were surveyed in September 2013.

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[2] The town centre primary shopping frontage survey relied on GOAD mapping (March 2013)
[3] Use Classes Order 1997 (as amended)

3. Background

3.1 There is wide consensus that the nature of our town centres and high streets are changing. The perception that the traditional high street is failing to adapt to the demands of today's consumer society is something which has been widely publicised. Factors including the rise of online retailing, the loss of revenue to out-of-town shopping centres, and a reduction in consumer spending in a time of recession are all contributing factors which can lead to an increase in the number of vacant shop units[4].

3.2 Away from the main town centre, the district and local centres in Southend play an important role in maintaining sustainable communities. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) publication on parades of shops[5] has attempted to define the 'neighbourhood parade', its role and function, and identifies the challenges it faces. Perhaps most importantly in the context of this document, the DCLG publication suggests that as the trend for 'main food' shopping to be bought online increases, there will remain a need for additional 'top-up' shopping in local neighbourhood parades.

3.3 Ultimately, while the rate of growth of internet retailing has been impressive in recent years the vast majority of retailing in the UK still happens in 'bricks and mortar' shops. According to National Statistics, the total volume of retail sales in real terms by online channels accounted for less than 9% per annum[6]. Town centres and high streets are still a necessity therefore; however it is the way in which they function that is likely to undergo adaptation in order to meet the changing needs of the consumer. One interpretation of this is that high streets of the future will 'continue to produce income for business interests, but not just through selling goods to walk-in customers. Services such as coffee shops and nail bars, which cannot be replicated on the internet, will continue to thrive'[7]. Indeed, in a move away from the traditional composition of the high street, the review conducted by Mary Portas in 2011 recommended that high streets become 'multifunctional and social places which offer a clear and compelling purpose and experience that's not available elsewhere'[8].

3.4 The Government's Response to the Portas Review[9] outlined the importance of ensuring diverse and competitive town centres which do not solely rely on retail, and suggested that the planning system do everything it can to ensure the viability and vitality of our town centres. Indeed, planning policies should be in place to actively support and encourage thriving town and other centres with vibrant, diverse high streets where people want to shop, socialise and spend time interacting.

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[4] GENECON & Partners, for Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Dec 2011. Understanding High Street Performance. http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/business-sectors/docs/u/11-1402-understanding-high-street-performance.pdf
[5] Communities and Local Government. Parades of Shops- Towards an understanding of performance and prospects. June 2012 http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/regeneration/pdf/2156925.pdf
[6] The Changing Face of UK retail in today's multi-channel world. Experian, March 2011. http://www.experian.co.uk/assets/business-strategies/white-papers/wp-the-changing-face-of-uk-retail.pdf
[7] Cliff Guy: 'Propping up a failing sector?' Town & Country Planning, 2012, vol. 81, April, pp 171-173.
[8] Mary Portas: The Portas Review: An Independent Review into the Future of Our High Streets. Dec. 2011. www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/business-sectors/docs/p/11-1434-portas-review-future-of-high-streets
[9] Communities and Local Government. High Streets at the Heart of our Communities: the Government's Response to the Mary Portas Review. March 2012. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7525/2120019.pdf

3.5 For Southend Borough Council, it is important to gain an accurate picture of the current composition and 'health' of the town and other centres in order to understand how they currently function and how best to plan for their future. The Southend Town Centre and Retail Study (2011)[10] provides a definitive assessment of the health of the main centres in the Borough. This Technical Report presents the findings of an up-to-date use class survey of both primary and secondary shopping frontages, which should be read alongside the Council's main retail and town centre study.

National Context

3.6 A key principle of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published March 2012, is to proactively drive and support sustainable economic development[11] through the promotion of competitive town centres that provide customer choice and a diverse retail offer which reflects the individuality of town centres[12]. In drawing up Local Plans local planning authorities should recognise town centres as the heart of their communities and pursue policies to support their viability and vitality[12]. In order to achieve this, the Council is expected to define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas, based on a clear definition of primary and secondary frontages in designated centres, and should make it clear which uses will be permitted in such locations through the use of development management policies[12].

Temporary Uses

3.7 Under newly introduced permitted development rights[13], buildings in specific Use Classes (A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, B1, D1 and D2) will be able to change to one of a limited number of alternative Use Classes (A1, A2, A3 and B1) for a single continuous period of up to two years without requiring planning permission. Nevertheless, the NPPF, in paragraph 23, is clear that "*local planning authorities should: … define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas, based on a clear definition of primary and secondary frontages in designated centres, and set policies that make clear which uses will be permitted in such locations*". Further, such permitted development rights are subject to certain conditions and are temporary in nature. However, there will remain instances where the change of use of a building does not constitute permitted development and would require the granting of planning permission.

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[10] The Southend Town Centre and Retail Study (2011).
http://www.southend.gov.uk/downloads/download/595/retail_study
[11] NPPF paragraph 17.
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf
[12] NPPF paragraph 23
[13] Class D of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment) (England) Order 2013 [GPDO]

Local Context

3.8 At a local level, the Core Strategy (2007)[14] contains the main strategic policy relating to the Borough's town and other centres.

Core Strategy policy CP2 'Town Centre and Retail Development' sets out the retail hierarchy and network of centres within the Borough, which establishes:

- The Southend Town Centre as the first preference for all forms of retail development and for other town centre uses attracting large numbers of people;
- The centres of Westcliff (centred around Hamlet Court Road) and Leigh (Centred around Leigh Broadway) will support Southend Town Centre as District Centres providing a range of local comparison shopping, convenience shopping and services to the neighbouring communities;
- Existing centres elsewhere will be supported as local centres and will meet the day to day convenience needs of their local communities.

Policy CP2 further outlines that '*Town centre and retail development should be located within these centres, should contribute to their vitality and viability, and must be appropriate to the function, size and character of the centre concerned, in accordance with the above hierarchy and priorities*'[15].

These centres perform a vital retail function for the areas that they serve and contribute to the local economy. It is important that frontages within these centres are appropriately managed to ensure that the retail character and function of the centre as a whole is not significantly eroded as they are important for local economic vitality and contribute to creating sustainable communities.

3.9 In addition to CP2, the Council also applies policies contained in the 1994 Borough Local Plan relating to retail development within town centres, as well as retailing in district and local centres. In particular the approach to managing primary and secondary shopping frontages is currently set out by saved Policy S5 of the Local Plan, with the frontage designations defined on the accompanying Proposals Map. However, as already stated, it is proposed that this saved policy will be superseded by Policies DS2 and DM14 as proposed in the emerging SCAAP and Development Management DPD respectively, and the Policies Map amended appropriately.

3.10 In order to set and apply effective town centre development management policies, it was necessary to understand the current condition and health of the Borough's centres and to determine whether or not the primary or secondary frontage designations applied under the 1994 Local Plan remained appropriate for maintaining healthy centres over the new plan period. In accordance with the NPPF, any management mechanisms proposed within the policies that seek to protect the role and function of the town and other centres must be sustainable, realistic and based on robust evidence.

3.11 Primary frontages can be appropriate locations for a range of non-retail uses including food and drink establishments and financial services such as banks. These uses are

[14] Southend-on-Sea Core Strategy Development Plan Document (Dec 2007). http://www.southend.gov.uk/download/1036/core_strategy_dpd1

[15] Southend-on-Sea Core Strategy Development Plan Document (Dec 2007). Policy CP2: 'Town Centre and Retail Development'. http://www.southend.gov.uk/download/1036/core_strategy_dpd1

complementary to the retail function of the primary frontage adding to their attraction, and encouraging multi-purpose journeys. However, an over-concentration of non-retail uses within the primary frontage can detract from its shopping function and may prejudice its vitality and viability, create extensive lengths of "dead" frontage and a lack of proper shop window displays. This can detract from the attractiveness of the street to shoppers or isolate particular shops or areas from the main pedestrian flows. It is therefore necessary to manage the shopping function of centres to ensure their vitality and viability is not significantly harmed.

3.12 Secondary frontages often contain mainly retail uses but can also offer a greater diversity of other business uses that provide important services for the areas that they serve. It is therefore important that the character and function of these secondary frontages are maintained and enhanced as they provide a vital service, meeting the day-to-day needs of local communities.

3.13 The location and extent of the primary and secondary shopping frontages in Southend is already established on the saved Local Plan Proposals Map. The emerging Development Management DPD and SCAAP have reviewed and proposed amendments to some of these boundaries, as can be seen in Appendix D.

3.14 The purpose of this paper is to present the findings of an up-to-date retail survey to further examine the composition of respective frontages across the Borough in terms of the types of use within each particular area, and to compare those existing frontage designations outlined by the Local Plan Proposals Map to those frontage designations being progressed by the Development Management DPD and SCAAP Policies Maps, including a presentation of the amendments being sought.

4. Results of the Retail Surveys

Existing Planning Policy Position for managing Primary Shopping Frontage

Saved Policy S5 Local Plan (1994)[16]

4.1 Primary Shopping Frontages are areas within centres that are likely to include a high proportion of retail uses. However, national guidance does not go to the extent of defining exactly what constitutes a 'high proportion' of retail uses. This is for each local planning authority to determine, and should be based on clear evidence.

4.2 The Primary Shopping Frontage areas in Southend are currently designated and managed according to national policy and the Local Plan 1994 and accompanying Proposal Map. Saved Policy S5: 'Non-Retail Uses' (Appendix A), relates to all Primary Shopping Frontages and Secondary Shopping Frontages within the Borough. The policy sets out criteria that a planning proposal needs to satisfy in order for a change of use proposal to be granted in areas of primary shopping frontage. The main emphasis of this policy is to protect the proportion of retail use within the frontage and safeguard its character.

4.3 According to the Use Class Order (1987) (Amendment 2010) (England), a retail use is classified as 'A1' and can include, for example, a clothes shop, a post office, a hairdressers or a charity shop, amongst others. Once a shop has permission for an 'A1' use, it can freely become any type of shop which falls under that use class, for example, a butcher's may become a hairdresser's without requiring planning permission. It is therefore beyond the scope of the planning system to determine who occupies a unit with a specific use class.

4.4 A key criteria of Saved Policy S5 relates to Primary Shopping Frontage and states that within these areas permission will not normally be granted where a proposal results in the proportion of frontage remaining in retail use (Use Class A1) falling below 80% within either the individual street block or the centre as a whole. The primary objective of this policy requirement is to maintain a high proportion of retail uses within designated primary frontages.

4.5 Table 1 below shows the current proportion of frontage, measured in terms of length, which is currently in retail (Use Class A1) use per Primary Shopping Frontage Area (PSF Area). Overall, the primary frontage of Southend Town Centre is currently composed of 75% retail (A1) and 25% non-retail uses. This is based on the frontage width of the ground floor units measured in metres. Despite the town centre primary frontage retail (A1) proportion falling below the Local Plan 80% A1 threshold, these findings demonstrate that the Local Plan polices have ensured the maintenance of what is considered to be a 'high proportion' of retail (A1) use across the Town Centre PSF Area, in line with the NPPF definition.

4.6 Outside the Town Centre, within the District and Local Centre's, as listed in Table 1, the overall proportion of retail (A1) within each centre's primary frontage varies from 50 - 83%, which demonstrates that the Local Plan policies have ensured that the primary

[16] Southend-on-Sea Borough Local Plan (1994). Saved Policy Policy S5: Non-Retail Uses. http://www.southend.gov.uk/download/928/blp_chapter_5

frontages in each centre have remained predominately retail (A1). However, the findings show that all of the centres are currently falling below the Local Plan 80% A1 threshold, except in the North Shoebury PSF, which is a small centre consisting of just 12 units, anchored by a large supermarket.

Table 1 Current Retail (A1) percentage per Primary Shopping Frontage Area (Saved Local Plan designations)

Southend-on-Sea Local Plan Primary Shopping Frontage	Threshold criteria (%) set out in Local Plan – Saved Policy S5	Percentage of frontage classified as A1 Retail (Retail Survey Feb 2013)
Southend Town Centre	80	75*
Leigh Broadway	80	62
Westcliff – Hamlet Court Road	80	61
West Leigh – London Road	80	67
Thorpe Bay – The Broadway	80	50
Eastwood – Western Approaches	80	68
North Shoebury	80	83
Shoeburyness- West Road	80	65

** Goad survey March 2013*

Emerging Policy Position

4.7 As explained above, Saved Policy S5 is being replaced by emerging policies in the SCAAP and Development Management DPD.

- Proposed Policy DS2 of the emerging SCAAP outlines the Council's proposed approach to managing primary shopping frontages in the town centre; and
- Proposed Policy DM14[17] of the Development Management DPD outlines the approach for those within District and Local Centres throughout the rest of the borough. This consists of primary shopping frontage in Leigh Broadway; Westcliff; West Leigh; Thorpe Bay; Eastwood; North Shoebury and Shoeburyness.

4.8 Both the Development Management DPD and SCAAP have not yet been adopted. The submission versions of the documents were published for consultation in March 2011 and September 2011 respectively. However, following publication of the NPPF in March 2012 the Council now intends to publish a revised proposed-submission version of both documents, which are likely to include amendments to Policies DS2 and DM14[17] respectively. The timetable for the preparation of these documents can be viewed in the Southend Local Development Scheme (LDS) available on the Council's website via the relevant planning pages: http://www.southend.gov.uk/

4.9 Notwithstanding the impending revision to these planning policy documents, the published versions of Policies DS2 and DM14 include amendments to the Primary Shopping Frontage designations, as compared to the Local Plan. These amendments together with the results of the use class survey per primary shopping frontage area can be viewed in Appendix D and Table 2 below.

[17] Please note; 'Policy DM14: Shopping Frontage Management' is likely to be renamed to 'Policy DM13: Shopping Frontage Management outside the Town Centre'' in the forthcoming Revised Proposed-Submission Development Management DPD.

Table 2 Current retail (A1) percentage of Primary Shopping Frontage Areas –Proposed SCAAP and Development Management DPD designations Vs Existing Local Plan

Southend-on-Sea Primary Shopping Frontage	Percentage of Proposed PSF designation[18] classified as A1 Retail	Percentage of saved Local Plan PSF designation classified as A1 Retail	Difference (% of A1 frontage) between proposed PSF and existing saved Local Plan PSF designation
Southend Town Centre	81	75	+6.5
Leigh Broadway	65	62	+2.7
Westcliff – Hamlet Court Road	62	61	+1.7
West Leigh – London Road	67	67	0.0
Thorpe Bay – The Broadway	61	50	+11.3
Eastwood – Western Approaches	68	68	0.0
North Shoebury	83	83	0.0
Shoeburyness- West Road	69	65	+4.2

Southend Town Centre – GOAD Survey March 2013
Other Primary Shopping Frontages – Survey Feb 2013

4.10 It is important that town centres are attractive, well-designed and well managed, with a good mix of uses for shoppers and visitors, and are able to provide a focal point for business and social interactions. This is something which was highlighted by the Portas Review (2011), which emphasises that shopping should be just one part of a rich mix of activities[19].

4.11 A key difference between the existing policy approach to managing Primary Shopping Frontage, as outlined by Policy S5 of the Local Plan, and that proposed in the first published versions of the Development Management DPD and SCAAP is a reduction of the 80% retail use (Use Class A1) threshold criteria to 70%.

4.12 Both the Development Management DPD and SCAAP propose alterations to the existing Local Plan Primary Frontage designations, which have been made to reflect the existing composition of individual street blocks and the wider balance between protecting the retail function and vitality of the centre, whilst allowing for the potential diversification of each centre. Within the Town Centre a number of primary frontages that have a high proportion of non-retail uses have been replaced by secondary frontages, which not only results in a more flexible approach to managing active frontages in that locality but also results in the proportion of retail (A1) frontage in the wider PSF Area increasing. The proposed alterations to primary frontages results in the proportion occupied by A1 retail use rising by 6.5% in the Town Centre; 2.7% in Leigh Broadway; 1.7% in Westcliff; 11.3% in Thorpe Bay; and 4.2% in Shoeburyness (Table 2).

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[18] Proposed Town Centre Primary Shopping Frontages are outlined in the emerging Southend Central Area Action Plan (SCAAP) and Policies Map; The Primary Shopping Frontages outside of the Town Centre are outlined in the emerging Development Management DPD and Policies Map.
[19] Portas, Mary (2011)The Portas Review: An independent review into the future of our high streets.

Vacancies

4.13 The proportion of vacant street level property provides a strong indication of the health of primary shopping frontages. It should, however, be considered with a degree of caution as vacancies can arise even in the strongest town centres, particularly where properties are undergoing alterations or extensions.

4.14 Table 3 below outlines the vacancy rate for each of the Primary Shopping Frontage areas in the Borough based on these surveys; the proportion of vacant units within these areas is in general relatively low. However, the proportion of vacant units within the town centre PSF remains relatively high (20%) compared to the national average of 14.1%[20], especially given the sequential preference afforded to the town centre by local planning policy. However, it should be noted that of the 43 vacancies within the town centre PSF, 28 of these were in the Victoria Plaza shopping centre, which was extensively refurbished creating a number of new units and additional floorspace in 2008, the year which marked the onset of economic recession in the UK. Indeed the vacancy rate of the town centre PSF minus those frontages in Victoria Plaza is only 10.3% (6.7% in terms of length of frontage), which is below the national average of 14.1%.

Table 3 Vacancy rates – Proposed Primary Shopping Frontage areas

Southend-on-Sea Primary Shopping Frontage	Number of units	% units Vacant	% of frontage vacant (calculated in terms of length)
Southend Town Centre*	215	20.0	16.0
Leigh Broadway**	203	5.4	5.4
Westcliff – Hamlet Court Road**	96	10.4	10.4
West Leigh – London Road**	42	2.4	2.1
Thorpe Bay – The Broadway**	43	0	0
Eastwood – Western Approaches**	5	20	5.2
North Shoebury**	12	0	0
Shoeburyness- West Road**	44	11.4	15.4

**Southend Town Centre – GOAD survey March 2013*
*** Primary Shopping Frontages outside the Town Centre – Survey Feb 2013*

[20] Vacancy rate of the biggest 650 town centres in England, Scotland and Wales, 2013, Local Data Company, Reported in Planning Resource September 2013: http://www.planningresource.co.uk/article/1211189/shop-vacancies-remain-high-says-report

5. Primary Shopping Frontage Areas – Locational Commentary

5.1 This technical report and, indeed the policy approach set out by saved policy S5 and emerging policies DM14 and PS2, considers designated primary and secondary shopping frontages only. In this regard, it is important to understand that centres are often made up of, and influenced by, a mixture of primary and secondary frontages as well as the function and amenity of the surrounding area, that together contribute to the variety and vitality of these centres.

5.2 If we take the example of Southend town centre for instance, proposed policy PS2 seeks to manage the designated primary frontages so that the proportion of retail use does not fall below 70%. This approach not only seeks to secure the retail emphasis and focus of these frontages by setting a percentage threshold target, whilst allowing for an increase in supporting non-retail town centre uses as compared to the existing policy approach (80%), but also recognises that these primary frontages are crucially supported by adjacent secondary frontages, which do not include a retail percentage target and therefore allows for further diversification of the town centre and its offer.

5.3 Furthermore, it is important to understand that Southend's town centre is perpendicular and well connected to the central seafront area. The central seafront area represents an important visitor destination in its own right, comprising a range of leisure uses, such as Southend Pier, and award winning public spaces, including City Beach, which together with the town centre supports a wider multifunctional Central Area within Southend that offers a unique and diverse visitor/ shopper experience. This area is the subject of the SCAAP.

5.4 This technical report should be considered alongside the Southend Town Centre and Retail Study (2011)[21], which provides a wider assessment of the health of the main centres in the Borough beyond that of just the primary and secondary frontages.

Town Centre

5.5 The Town Centre Primary Shopping Frontage is the largest in Southend, consisting of over 200 units. It is located on, or just off, a traditional linear High Street, which is anchored to the north by The Victoria Shopping Centre and to the south by The Royals. The town centre is classified in the Southend Core Strategy as a regional centre and will remain the first preference for all forms of retail development and for other town centre uses occurring in the borough.

5.6 The Retail Study (2011) outlines that there is a high degree of vacancies in the town centre, especially along more secondary streets, although there are very few vacancies on the prime High Street itself. 20% of the units in the proposed PSF are currently vacant (Table 1). However, as outlined above, if the vacancy rate of the town centre PSF minus those frontages in Victoria Plaza is considered, a rate of just 10.3% is evident (6.7% in terms of length of frontage), well below the national average. Also of pertinence is that, throughout the centre, many of the vacant units are small and consequently may not meet

[21] The Southend Town Centre and Retail Study (2011). http://www.southend.gov.uk/downloads/download/595/retail_study

modern retailer requirements. Larger units would be expected to be more attractive to mainstream retailers (Retail Study 2011).

5.7 Given the current relatively high vacancy rate of the proposed primary frontage within Victoria Plaza, particularly within the upper levels of the shopping centre, the Council will continue to keep these proposed frontage designations, as well as others not on the prime High Street, under review through existing monitoring arrangements as the SCAAP is further progressed.

5.8 The percentage of retail (A1) frontage (measured in terms of length) in the existing Local Plan town centre PSF designation is 75%, which is below the existing Local Plan 80% policy threshold. As explained above, Policy DS2 of the published SCAAP proposes a number of amendments to the Primary Shopping Frontage designation, this includes a reduction in total length (circa 300 metres) of Primary Frontage when compared to that currently designated by the Local Plan. These amendments results in 81% of the SCAAP Primary Frontage being occupied as retail (A1) use. This clearly exceeds the proposed policy threshold of 70%, and therefore, provides a more flexible approach to managing primary frontages than that of the existing Local Plan.

Leigh Broadway

5.9 Leigh Broadway is approximately 5km west of the town centre. The centre is situated to the south of the A13 and to the west of Westcliff. Leigh is an attractive historic centre based around a traditional high street. The main shopping provision is provided around The Broadway/Rectory Grove triangle and along the length of The Broadway itself. This forms the designated district centre boundary.

5.10 The proposed PSF frontage consists of approximately 200 units. The Retail Study 2011 concluded the following for the Leigh District Centre:

- There is an above average representation of comparison retailers in the centre as a whole although there is no representation by any major high street retailers.
- The high proportion of comparison retailers indicates a healthy and popular destination, particularly given that it is a district centre. These independent outlets include high end and boutique fashion retailers, and most clothing goods categories are represented.
- There are also a good number of art galleries, craft and gift shops – all which add to the centre’s diversity. The quality and range of the independent retail offer is strong, and this is a key attribute.

5.11 The low proportion of vacant units in the PSF (5.4%) is an indication that the centre is performing well. However, at present 65% of the proposed PSF is occupied by A1 uses, below the 70% threshold proposed in Policy DM14 of the first published version of the Development Management DPD.

Westcliff

5.12 The Westcliff Primary Shopping Frontage is located approximately 3km west of Southend town centre and consists of 96 units. The wider District Centre is based around Hamlet Court Road. The centre has a strong service sector representation. While a good representation of service sector uses would be expected in a district centre, balancing the mix of other retail uses would serve to strengthen the centre (Retail Study 2011).

5.13 At present 10% of the units in the proposed PSF are vacant and 62% of its frontage is occupied by A1 retail uses, which is below the 70% A1 threshold proposed in the published version of the Development Management DPD.

West Leigh

5.14 West Leigh Primary Shopping Frontage consist of 42 units and is located in the west of the Borough stretching along the London Road, a main commuter road to Southend and the town centre.

5.15 Just 2.4% of the units in the proposed PSF are vacant and 67% of its frontage is occupied by A1 retail uses, which is just below the proposed 70% retail threshold of the published version of the Development Management DPD.

Thorpe Bay

5.16 Thorpe Bay Primary Shopping Frontage is a moderately sized and compact centre (43 units) approximately 3km east of Southend town centre. There are no vacant units within the PSF and 61% of its frontage is occupied by A1 retail uses. Again, this is below the 70% threshold proposed in Policy DM14 of the published version of the Development Management DPD.

Eastwood

5.17 The Primary Shopping Frontage in Eastwood, Western Approaches, consists of just five units, anchored by a supermarket. One unit is currently vacant; however, this only results in 5% of the total Primary Frontage being occupied by vacant units. The proportion of frontage occupied by retail (A1) use is 68%, just below the proposed A1 threshold within the published version of the Development Management DPD of 70%.

North Shoebury

5.18 North Shoebury Primary Shopping Frontage consists of 12 units and is anchored by a major supermarket. The vacancy rate is at 0% and the proportion of frontage occupied by retail (A1) use is 83%.

Shoeburyness

5.19 The Primary Shopping Frontage in Shoeburyness is based around West Road at the eastern periphery of Southend's urban area and consists of 44 units. The vacancy rate is at 11% and the proportion of frontage occupied by retail (A1) use is 69%, which is just below the

A1 threshold of 70% as proposed in the published version of the Development Management DPD.

6. Secondary Shopping Frontages

6.1 The Secondary Frontages located throughout the Borough are characterised as areas containing a clear retail element whilst offering greater opportunities for flexibility and a diversity of uses. This is in acknowledgement that these are not just shopping destinations and that appropriate complementary uses can enhance town centres and other centres alike, often encouraging footfall beyond the working day.

6.2 As per Primary Shopping Frontage designations the approach to managing Secondary Shopping Frontages is being progressed by the Development Management DPD and SCAAP (Appendix A- C). A key element of the approach is to maintain an active frontage so as to create pedestrian interest and footfall and assist in meeting the day-to-day needs of local communities.

6.3 A survey was carried out in September 2013 to ensure that the proposed Secondary Shopping Frontages designations in the emerging DM DPD and SCAAP remain appropriate in terms of their extent and location. The survey charted the extent of active commercial frontages within Secondary Shopping Frontage Areas and noted locations where active frontage has been lost to residential.

6.4 The results of the survey can be viewed in Appendix E. The majority of the proposed Secondary Shopping Frontage (SSF) designations remain appropriate. However, the results of the survey suggest possible amendments and removal of SSF designation in particular circumstances, including a combination of where: lengths of the frontage are no longer active; the frontage no longer offers a service that contributes to the vitality of the area; and where the frontage is located close to and well served by shops and services within other proposed secondary or primary frontages.

Table 4: Amendments proposed to Secondary Shopping Frontage Designation as being progressed by the Development Management DPD Policies Map.

Ref[22]	Location	Reason
Town Centre	Alteration of Town Centre Secondary Shopping Frontage to remove a section of York Road. Opposite No.s 28 to 56 York Road and formerly a market.	Previous units and frontage demolished and replaced with temporary car park. Note: this area is part of a wider SCAAP proposal site for mixed use development, including retail.
1	Alteration of Secondary Shopping Frontage to remove No.s 30 to 58 High street, Shoeburyness.	No.s 30 to 58 are primarily residential, no longer contributing to the designation of secondary shopping frontage
4	Alteration of Secondary Shopping Frontage to remove No.s 62 and 64 Ness Road, Shoeburyness.	No.s 62 and 64 are residential, no longer contributing to secondary shopping frontage
9	Alteration of Secondary Shopping Frontage to remove No. 209 Hamstel Road	No. 209 Hamstel Road is a residential property, no longer contributing to secondary shopping frontage
15	Alteration of Secondary Shopping Frontage to remove No.s 258 and 260 Sutton Road.	No.s 258 and 260 are residential, no longer contributing to secondary shopping frontage

[22] Refer to Appendix E below, Survey Results (Sept 2013) – Secondary Shopping Frontage Areas

18	Alteration of Secondary Shopping Frontage to remove 269 to 301 Victoria Avenue	No.s 269 to 301 are primarily residential or vacant, no longer contributing to secondary shopping frontage.
18	Alteration of Secondary Shopping Frontage to remove No.s 24 and 34 West Street	No.s 24 to 34 are primarily residential or vacant, no longer contributing to secondary shopping frontage.
21	Alteration of Secondary Shopping Frontage to remove No.s 6 to 18 Rochford Road	No.s 6 to 18 have always been residential and were included in the secondary frontage designation in error.
24	Alteration of Secondary Shopping Frontage to remove No.s 8 Wells Avenue and No.s 37 to 43 Eastwoodbury Crescent	No.s 8 Wells Avenue and No.s 37 to 43 Eastwoodbury Crescent have been converted to residential and no longer contribute to secondary shopping frontage
26	Alteration of Secondary Shopping Frontage to remove No.s 147 to 169 Westborough Road, No.s 134 to 152 Westborough Road and No. 50B Ramuz Drive.	No.s 147 to 153, 169, 140 to 144 and 148 Westborough Road have all now been converted to residential. Other properties are vacant or in poor condition. It is considered that this secondary shopping frontage no longer needs to be retained, given the close proximity of the London Road secondary shopping frontage to the South (approx.. 250m).
28	Alteration of Secondary Shopping Frontage to remove Balmoral Court, 273 London Road	Balmoral Court, No. 273 London Road has been converted to residential and no longer contributes to secondary shopping frontage
31	Alteration of Secondary Shopping Frontage to remove No.s 106 to 120 and 182 to 206 Station Road	No.s 106 to 120 and 182 to 206 Station Road consist of a number of residential conversions and high level of long term vacancies. Given the close proximity to the Hamlet Court Road district shopping centre (approx. 250m), it is considered that this area of secondary shooping frontage no longer needs to be retained.
33	Alteration of Secondary Shopping Frontage to remove No.s 361 to 385 Westborough Road	No.s 361 to 385 Westborough Road consists of a number of residential conversions and high level of long term vacancies. Given the close proximity to the London Road secondary shopping centre (approx. 350m), it is considered that this area of secondary shooping frontage no longer needs to be retained.
35	Alteration of Secondary Shopping Frontage to remove No. 8 Nelson Road and No.s 887 to 891 London Road	No. 8 Nelson Road and No.s 887 to 891 London Road are a residential property, no longer contributing to secondary shopping frontage
41	Alteration of Secondary Shopping Frontage to remove No. 7 Nelson Drive, No.s 1 to 3 Drayton Mews, Nelson Drive, No. 10 Dundonald Drive, No.s 1A and 1B Woodfield Road and No.s 4 to 10 Highcliff Drive	No. 7 Nelson Drive, No.s 1 to 3 Drayton Mews, Nelson Drive, No. 10 Dundonald Drive, No.s 1A and 1B Woodfield Road and No.s 4 to 10 Highcliff Drive are all now designated as residential and therefore no longer contribute to secondary shopping frontage.
42	Alteration of Secondary Shopping Frontage to remove No.s 5 to 7 Victor Drive	No.s 5 to 7 Victor Drive are residential, no longer contributing to secondary shopping frontage

50	Alteration of Secondary Shopping Frontage to remove No.s 348 to 352, No. 382 (Clyst Court) and No.s 418 and 420 Rayleigh Road	No.s 350 and 352, No. 382 (Clyst Court) and No.s 418 and 420 Rayleigh Road are all residential properties and were included in the designation in error. No. 348 Rayleigh Road is used as a doctors surgery and has no secondary shopping frontage and should therefore be removed from the designation.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Primary frontages can be appropriate locations for a range of non-retail uses including food and drink establishments and financial services such as banks. These uses are complementary to the retail function of the primary frontage adding to their attraction, and encouraging multi-purpose journeys. However, an over-concentration of non-retail uses within the primary frontage can detract from its shopping function and may prejudice its vitality and viability, create extensive lengths of "dead" frontage and a lack of proper shop window displays. Maintaining a high concentration of retail uses ensures the attractiveness of the centres as accessible, diverse shopping areas; which is paramount to the vitality and viability of the local economy.

Town Centre Primary Shopping Frontage

7.2 This technical report demonstrates that the existing saved Local Plan policies relating to shopping frontages have ensured that the existing Primary Frontages of the Southend Town Centre continue to retain a high percentage of retail uses. Despite this, it is acknowledged that this percentage (75%) is currently below the existing Local Plan threshold (80%). The proposed alterations to the existing Local Plan Proposals Map for the town centre, being bought forward by the emerging SCAAP, result in a concentration of Town Centre Primary Shopping Frontages and consequently a reduction in their overall length. The result of this is a higher proportion of A1 retail use within the town centre; 81% as opposed to 75% based on the existing Local Plan threshold.

7.3 Nonetheless, the findings of this technical report suggest 20% of units within the Primary Frontage in the town centre are currently vacant particularly due to the number of vacant units within the Victoria Shopping Centre. This relatively high vacancy rate, higher than the national average (14.1%[23]), was taken into account when determining the percentage threshold for the town centre PSF being bought forward by the SCAAP. To this end, it was considered that lowering the percentage threshold for PSF to 70% would enable Southend town centre to evolve and broaden its offer, providing an enhanced multi-functional experience that retains a strong retail focus, which is attractive to users and supports the vitality and viability of the centre.

7.4 However, as noted above, the majority of vacancies within the town centre PSF are in the Victoria Plaza shopping centre. Indeed, the vacancy rate of the town centre PSF minus those units in Victoria Plaza is just 10.3% (6.7% in terms of length of frontage), which is well below the national average of 14.1%[23]. Given the high vacancy rate within Victoria Plaza, particularly within the upper levels of the shopping centre, the Council will continue to keep the proposed primary shopping frontage designations in this location and those not located on the prime High Street under review as the emerging SCAAP is further progressed.

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[23] Vacancy rate of the biggest 650 town centres in England, Scotland and Wales, 2013, Local Data Company, Reported in Planning Resource September 2013: http://www.planningresource.co.uk/article/1211189/shop-vacancies-remain-high-says-report

Recommendation: The Southend Central Area Action Plan (SCAAP) policy should continue to seek to achieve a minimum target of 70% of the identified Primary Frontage (measured in terms of ground floor frontage) as retail (A1) in order to maintain a 'high proportion' of retail frontage as expected by the NPPF.

Primary Shopping Frontages within District and Local Centres

7.5 Outside the Town Centre, within District and Local Centre's, the majority of the existing Local Plan designated Primary Frontage consists of retail (A1) units. However, this proportion varies between each centre and is consistently below the existing Local Plan and emerging Development Management DPD targets that are 80% and 70% respectively.

7.6 The alterations to the existing Local Plan Proposals Map, being bought forward by the emerging Development Management DPD has resulted in the proportion of A1 retail frontage remaining the same or slightly increasing within a number of the district and local centres primary shopping frontage, including at Leigh Broadway, Westcliff, Thorpe Bay and Shoeburyness, although by large these remain consistently below the existing Local Plan and emerging Development Management DPD targets. The proportion of vacant units is generally quite low within the District and Local Centres Primary Shopping Frontage, ranging from 0 – 11%.

7.7 In order to take account of the lower proportion of retail uses within the Primary Shopping Frontage of the District and Local Centres in comparison to existing Local Plan and emerging Development Management DPD targets, and to ensure these centres remain viable, enabling them to evolve and diversify in order to continue to sustainably meet the needs of the local communities they serve and maintain their retail focus, a minimum PSF threshold of 60% is considered an appropriate target for ensuring A1 retail uses continue to form a high proportion of District and Local Centres, whilst allowing for these Centres to evolve.

Recommendation: The Development Management policy should seek to achieve a minimum target of 60% of the identified Primary Frontage (measured in terms of ground floor frontage) as retail (A1) in order to maintain a 'high proportion' of retail frontages, appropriate to the District and Local Centres of Southend-on-Sea.

Secondary Shopping Frontages

7.8 The majority of the Secondary Shopping Frontage (SSF) designations as proposed by the Development Management DPD and Southend Central Area Action Plan remain appropriate and characterised by active frontages. However, a number of amendments are required to ensure these remain appropriate and justified, comprising possible amendments and the removal of the SSF designation in particular circumstances including a combination of where lengths of the frontage are no longer active; the frontage no longer offers a service that contributes to the vitality of the area; and where the frontage is located close to and well served by shops and services within other proposed SSF's of PSF's. Examples include the proposed removal of SSF designation, as set out on the Local Plan Proposals Map, to 6-18 Rochford Road (Appendix E, Map 21) which are comprised of a run of residential dwellings and therefore not appropriate for designation as SSF's.

Recommendation: The revised proposed-submission versions of the Development Management DPD and Southend Central Area Action Plan should consider the amendments to their emerging Secondary Shopping Frontage designations as per Appendix E to ensure they remain appropriate and justified.

Next Steps

7.9 The recommendations of this technical report will further inform the preparation of policies in the Development Management DPD and Southend Central Area Action Plan. The proposed policies as well as the proposed Primary Shopping Frontage and Secondary Shopping Frontage designations will then be available for comments as part of the six week publication periods of the 'Revised Proposed-Submission Development Management DPD' and 'Revised Proposed Submission Southend Central Area Action Plan'. The timetable for each documents preparation can be viewed in the Southend Local Development Scheme available on the Council's website via the relevant planning pages: http://www.southend.gov.uk/

Appendix A – Saved Local Plan Policy S5

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 of 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 or 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.

Appendix B – Proposed Policy DM14 – Development Management DPD
(to be superseded by a revised version of the document)

Policy DM14 – Shopping Frontage Management

1. Primary and secondary frontages within Southend-on-Sea will be managed to reinforce their attractiveness, vitality and viability within the daytime and night-time economies. The character and function of both these frontages will be protected and enhanced.

2. The loss of Class A1 retail uses at the ground floor in the identified primary shopping frontages will be resisted. A loss of Class A1 retail use uses at the ground floor will only be considered if:

   (i) The proposed use will not result in Non-Class A1 retail uses exceeding 30% of the primary shopping area's ground floor frontage. Where Non-Class A1 uses already exceed 30% of a primary shopping area's ground floor primary frontage, no further Class A1 losses will be allowed; and

   (ii) An active shop front is retained or provided.

3. All developments in the secondary shopping frontage must maintain or provide an active shop front.

4. All new shop frontages will be of a high standard of design that is compatible with the architectural style and character of the building. The design of new shop fronts will incorporate the following design principles:

   (i) The fascia signs are integrated into the overall design and are in proportion to the shop front and the building. Fascia signs will respect and where appropriate improve the character of the general street scene;

   (ii) Roller shutter boxes and guides will be incorporated behind the fascia and the shutters will be open grills or punched;

   (iii) Blank frontages will be avoided on principal elevations;

   (iv) Active street frontages will be maintained and enhanced in non-residential frontages throughout Southend-on-Sea;

   (v) Opportunities for exposing upper floor windows will be maximised; and

   (vi) The loss of traditional features and shop fronts which contribute to the appearance and visual amenity of a building or surrounding area will not be allowed.

5. Where there are a number of empty units within a centre and little prospect of these units being occupied in the short term, the Council will work with the landowner/landlord to encourage the display of local art within the windows of the empty units.