

SHOPPING



Introduction

5.1. The Structure Plan Policy approach to shopping seeks a balance between out of town and town centre development with particular emphasis on the importance of maintaining and enhancing the viability and vitality of town centres. Expenditure on food and convenience goods is forecast to grow only modestly in Kent whilst expenditure on comparison goods is forecast to grow by approximately 3.6% per head per annum, mainly as a result of increased expenditure per head. This growth is, therefore, closely related to the existing geographical distribution of population in the county but increases in expenditure arising from population growth are expected. In Folkestone, it is hoped that this growth will provide a stimulus for improvements to the central area of the town.

5.2 All references to Use Classes in this chapter refer to those within the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) and the General Permitted Development Order 1995.

Use Class	Shops
A1	=
Use Class	Financial and Professional Services – where services are provided principally to visiting members of the public e.g. building societies, estate agents
A2	=
Use Class	Restaurants and Cafés
A3	=
Use Class	Drinking Establishments
A4	=
Use Class	Hot Food Take-aways
A5	=
Non-retail /	Those falling outside Use Class A1
Non-A1	
uses	=

5.3 Unless otherwise stated, all figures that relate to measured frontage and information relating to use class, are taken from the Shepway District Town Centre Audit 1998. The shopping frontage has been measured in metres for the total length (the combined length for both sides of a street where appropriate).

Note: The text and policies in this chapter are based on the shopping audit and measurement of shopping frontages, undertaken in 1998. Regular updates of the audit and shopping frontages for the purposes of implementing policies S3, S5, S6 and S7, are carried out, and persons seeking the most recent information, are advised to contact the Council.

Shopping aims and objectives

5.4 The Plan's shopping aims are :-

1. To encourage the retention and improvement of existing established retail areas particularly the main town centres.
2. To maintain a variety of shopping opportunities which enhance the range of retail services for local people

and visitors.

3. To encourage the expansion of comparison goods shopping at Folkestone Town Centre to consolidate its position as the principal retail centre in the district and retain a wide range of retail services within the district for local people.

4. To retain a wide range of retail services within town centres to which local people have easy access by a choice of means of transport and to encourage the retention of local / village shopping facilities to reduce reliance on the private car.

5. To provide guidance on the scale and location of provision for any new retail outlets.

6. To improve the physical environment of the shopping areas.

5.5 The Plan's shopping objectives are: -

1. To safeguard land for the development of a shopping centre comprising at least 10,000 square metres (108,000sq ft) in Folkestone Town Centre.

2. To secure the maintenance of a viable and attractive shopping environment through restrictions on changes to non-retail uses and measures to improve the appearance of shopping areas.

3. To encourage the provision and retention of local shopping facilities.

4. To resist the development of large-scale retail facilities where these would be likely to seriously affect the vitality and viability of existing town centres.

New retail development

5.6 Any new retail development will be positively encouraged within established town centres. Pressure for convenience and comparison retail outlets outside the existing centres will be resisted in the interests of maintaining the vitality and viability of town centres as a whole which remain the preferred location for new retail development, in accordance with the sequential approach of PPG6. Developers should be able to demonstrate that all potential town centre options have been thoroughly assessed before less central sites are considered for development. In applying the search sequence of the sequential test the first preference should be for town centre sites, where suitable sites or buildings suitable for conversion are available, followed by edge of centre sites, district and local centres and only the out-of-centre sites that are accessible by a choice of means of transport.

~~**POLICY S1** Within the District's town centres, new retail development will be permitted subject to the following criteria:-~~

~~a) The site is within or well integrated with the existing shopping area~~

~~b) There is no adverse impact on the local environment~~

~~c) The site is accessible by a choice of means of transport~~

5.7 Consultants CB Hillier Parker carried out a Retail Study Update in March 2000 which advised on the capacity for new retail development within the district. The study concluded that based on indicated performance of existing retailers and the high levels of trade retention, there was no capacity for additional convenience goods within Folkestone. Although there was capacity for new comparison goods floorspace, a planned new development at Bouverie Place, should meet this need.

5.8 In order to increase the incidence of linked car trips and minimise the effect of sporadic development of retail warehousing on the character of an area, it is the District Councils intention to concentrate such uses together in one area. An area at Park Farm, Folkestone was identified for retail warehousing, in line with the Government policy at the time, in the 1988 version of PPG6. National policy has since changed but there is already an established core of retail warehouse units at this location and the range of non-food retailers has increased in the last few years. The March 2000 Retail Update concluded that there was little capacity for additional bulky durable goods floorspace at Park Farm. Existing floorspace or outstanding commitments should absorb any growth.

5.9 Therefore, if after thorough investigation it is found that suitable alternatives do not exist in town centre or edge of centre locations, the District Council's identified preference for the location of new retail warehouses is at Park Farm. In addition to compliance with the sequential approach, applicants should demonstrate that there is a need for the development, that the majority of the goods sold cannot be sold from town centre stores, and that there would be no adverse impact on the town centre.

POLICY S2 Retail development should be located within existing town and district centres. Where suitable locations within centres are not available, edge of centre sites should be chosen. Where this is not possible, out of centre sites within the urban area may be acceptable. Proposals for retail development located outside town centres will only be acceptable where:-

- a. It can be demonstrated that there is a need for the development, and that alternative sites higher up the search sequence have been thoroughly investigated.
- b. The development would not individually or cumulatively with other developments have a detrimental impact on the vitality and viability of any nearby centres, or prejudice the prospect for further investment needed to safeguard their vitality and viability.
- c. The development would be accessible to all sections of the population by a choice of means of transport, including public transport.
- d. Development could be accommodated without adverse impact on amenity or highway considerations and would not prejudice the overall aim of reducing the need to travel.

In the case of retail warehouse development for the sale of bulky goods, a location at Park Farm may be appropriate, subject to the above criteria, and if developers and retailers can demonstrate that the majority of goods sold cannot be sold from town centre stores.

Edge of centre sites are those which are close enough to be readily accessible by foot from the centre and which can be served by a variety of means of transport.

Folkestone town centre

5.10 Folkestone is the primary shopping centre in the District with over 70,000 square metres of retail and service floorspace in the town centre and in 1999 had an estimated catchment population of approximately 212,000 population. This catchment population was predicted to rise to over 216,000 by 2011. It meets daily and weekly convenience shopping needs and also functions to a certain extent as a comparison goods centre. The potential comparison goods expenditure in the Folkestone catchment area is predicted to rise by £200 million between 1999 and 2011. Although this is substantial growth, Folkestone suffers from an outflow of comparison goods expenditure to neighbouring centres, with a large part of this potential expenditure being lost to larger sub-regional centres such as Canterbury. There are also parts of the town which suffer from poor environmental quality. In terms of convenience goods provision however, the town's food supermarkets retain a large portion of the available expenditure and even draw customers from outside the district.

5.11 In view of the major contribution made by shopping activity to the attractiveness and vitality of the town centre, and for the convenience of traders and shoppers, the District Planning Authority wishes to encourage the concentration of retail development in Folkestone Town Centre. A consultant's report in 1990 concluded that there could be a future retail demand to support a new retail development in the town centre, and an area was identified based on the Alexandra Gardens car park and has been allocated for such a use since the adoption of the Folkestone and Hythe Local Plan – First Alterations in 1991.

5.12 The Bouverie Place project involves significant private sector investment and will enable Folkestone to maintain and improve its market retail share. The District Council has approved a detailed scheme for 19,850 sq. m (213,700sq. ft) of new retail floorspace on a site which includes land surrounding the Alexandra Gardens car park. Work commenced in summer 2005 with programmed completion for Spring 2007. Policies concerning this development and other policies for Folkestone Town Centre are found in Chapter 13. Proposals for the physical improvement of Folkestone, Hythe and other town centres are set out in Chapter 8 Built Environment.

5.13 Other shopping centres in the District serve mainly local shopping needs. At these centres the authority's objective will be to encourage the retention of the existing level of provision to maintain a service consistent with local demands and to resist developments that would lead to significant undesirable changes to economic viability.

Primary and secondary shopping areas

5.14 The Local Plan follows advice in PPS6 in defining primary and secondary shopping frontages in the main town centres. Folkestone Town Centre covers a fairly extensive area running the length of Sandgate Road in the west, to The Old High Street in the east, and extending in distance some 800m in length (0.5 mile).

Primary shopping area

5.15 The measured frontage of the Primary Shopping area is 608m. The primary shopping area is compact in nature, running the extent of the pedestrianised precinct of Sandgate Road and the top end of Rendezvous Street. The area is characterised by a high proportion of retail shops; many of them occupied by multiple retailers. It is important to ensure that the centre retains such a concentration of retail shops and the development at Bouverie Square will provide an increased range and choice. However, the new development may alter the focus for retail development and any likely effect on the rest of the primary area and the more peripheral areas should be considered.

5.16 Non-A1 uses such as offices and building societies can add variety to shopping areas providing essential services, however in high numbers or excessive concentration, they can harm the vitality and viability of an area by interrupting the shopping frontage. It has therefore been appropriate for the District Planning Authority to restrict changes of use from retail to non-retail uses in the primary area. Although this policy has been effective in maintaining a viable area along Sandgate Road it has been less successful in Rendezvous Street, where there are a number of vacant units. This part of the main shopping area is important in attracting pedestrians out from the primary area towards the Old High Street. In order to fulfil this function and in mind of the vacancies, it may be appropriate to allow other uses to locate such as cafes and restaurants. The introduction of a substantial amount of new floorspace in the new development may also justify allowing a more flexible approach.

5.17 At present, 83.1% of the frontage in the primary area is in A1 retail use and the remaining 6.9% of non-A1 use is well distributed. Policy S3 will allow a degree of flexibility, allowing an extra 3.1% of A3 use to locate in the primary area. The Policy also seeks to prevent a concentration of such uses that would undermine the retail function and reduce the attractiveness of the shopping area as a whole.

POLICY S3 Proposals for development, redevelopment or change of use for Class A1 or A3 uses on ground floors in the [Primary Shopping Area of Folkestone Town Centre](#), as defined on the Proposal Map, will be permitted unless they would either:

Proposals for development, redevelopment or change of use for Class A1 or A3 uses on ground floors in the Primary Shopping Area of Folkestone Town Centre, as defined on the Proposal Map, will be permitted unless they would either:

- a) create a continuous frontage of two or more non-A1 units; or
- b) result in less than 80% of the total length of street frontage in the Primary Shopping Area being in A1 use.

Proposals for development, redevelopment or change of use of ground floor units in the Primary Shopping Area to any other use class will be refused.

5.18 On completion of the Bouverie Place shopping scheme, the site will also be included within the Primary Shopping frontage. The scheme as approved allows for a small amount of Class A3 units and as such, no further non-A1 uses will be permitted within the development.

Secondary shopping area

5.19 The measured frontage of secondary shopping area is 2059m. The mix of uses in this area is more varied reflecting previous Local Plan Policies, which encouraged Class A1, A2, and A3 uses to locate. The function of the secondary area is to support the primary area, providing a wide range of shops, services and restaurants but also providing an area where more specialist and individual shops can locate (due to smaller and cheaper units). The character of the eastern section of the area differs greatly from the western section. The retail function in the eastern periphery (around Tontine Street) has declined in recent years and there is now a high concentration of entertainment and food uses, a high number of vacancies and a low pedestrian footfall. In recognition of this change in function and the greater mix of uses, it is considered that a retail protection policy is no longer suitable in this area. The western end of the secondary area has a good mix of retail shops, banks, building societies, estate agents and food outlets. The Sainsburys food supermarket in

Town Walk is an important store, which acts as a draw for pedestrians along Sandgate Road from the primary area.

5.20 The secondary area will remain to be the preferred location for non-A1 uses and therefore Policy S4 provides additional opportunities for such development but seeks to prevent the harmful concentration of non-A1 uses, which could interrupt the shopping function.

POLICY S4 Within the [Secondary Shopping Area of Folkestone](#) as defined on the Proposal Map, proposals for development, redevelopment or change of use for Class A1, A2 and A3 (A4, A5) uses will be permitted unless they would create a continuous frontage of three or more non-A1 units.

Proposals for development, redevelopment or change of use of ground floor units in the Secondary Shopping Area to any other use class will only be allowed where it is demonstrated that they are appropriate to the character of the shopping area.

Hythe town centre shopping area

5.21 The measured frontage of Hythe shopping area is 1169m. The development of Hythe shopping area has been historically linked to the High Street, which is linear in form and extends to some 660m in length. The whole of the area lies within a Conservation Area and contains many listed buildings. The majority of the High Street from Douglas Avenue westwards is subject to peak hour pedestrianisation. The town centre is characterised by small units which provide a wide range of retail shops, services (including banks) and food outlets offering over 10,000sqm of floorspace. There are a limited number of multiple retailers present and independent traders occupy the majority of units. There are also three hotels and the Town Hall along the High Street, which complement the diversity of provision. Hythe can generally be described as a vital and viable centre and there is limited capacity for additional retail floorspace in the town.

5.22 The main challenge for Hythe town centre in recent years has followed the relocation of the main convenience food store to a larger site on the edge of the town centre. In general the vacancy rates within the town are low and below the national average. The new supermarket does attract people from a wider area surrounding Hythe although there is still a significant expenditure outflow from Hythe to other food supermarkets. Any improvements to the town should concentrate on strengthening links between the High Street and the supermarket to draw shoppers through to the High Street shops. This could be achieved through improved signage, additional pedestrian crossings etc. A Market Town Healthcheck is currently being carried out by the Countryside Agency and SEEDA. The results of this and the implications for the town centre will need to be considered.

5.23 Although there is a higher concentration of banks and restaurants towards the eastern end of the High Street, there is no longer a distinct core area of retail provision but a reasonable spread of Class A1, A2 and A3 uses along the whole extent. Currently, A1 units comprise 60.9% of the total frontage (excluding the new supermarket due to its isolated position) and A2/A3 units comprise a further 24.5%. For these reasons (and the location of the recent supermarket) it is considered that in order to protect the vitality and viability of the High Street, there are limited opportunities for further non-A1 development. It is therefore the aim of Policy S5 to restrict the number of non-A1 uses by only allowing a further 2.1% of the frontage within the town centre to be in non-A1 uses but also to control the concentration of such uses, to prevent any significant interruption of the retail frontage.

POLICY S5 Proposals for development, redevelopment or change of use for Class A1, A2 or A3(A4, A5) uses on ground floors in the defined [Shopping Area of Hythe town centre](#), will be permitted unless they would either:

- a) create a continuous frontage of three or more non-A1 units; or
- b) result in more than 42% of the total length of street frontage in the Shopping Area being in non-A1 use.

Proposals for development, redevelopment or change of use of ground floor units in Hythe Shopping Area to any other use class will only be allowed where it is demonstrated that they are appropriate to the character of the shopping area.

New Romney shopping area

5.24 The measured frontage of New Romney shopping area is 608m. New Romney is the main shopping area within Romney Marsh and acts mainly as a convenience goods and service centre. The shopping area is based along the High Street, which is also part of the main A259 route through the Marsh. As a consequence, the

High Street suffers from heavy traffic flows including heavy goods vehicles and there are conflicts in summer between vehicles and pedestrians due to the limited number of crossing points. Although the choice of comparison goods (especially clothes shops) is limited, the vacancy rate is very low, reflecting the town's relative viability.

5.25 The Kent Structure Plan 1990 identified the Romney Marsh area for additional food retailing space, and the evidence from a household survey conducted in March 2000 suggested that there was considerable leakage of convenience goods trade to Ashford and Folkestone. A small Sainsbury's store opened on the edge of New Romney shopping area in November 2001. This will meet the deficiency in convenience goods offer in New Romney. Improvements to the physical and visual linkages will be encouraged (including improved signage) between the new supermarket and the Shopping Area. A market town healthcheck is currently being carried out by the Countryside Agency and SEEDA. The results of this and the implications for the town centre will need to be considered.

5.26 There is currently 57.3% of the High Street frontage in A1 use. The centre has provided a range and choice of shops, for peoples every day needs and as such has remained a vital and viable centre As the main shopping area in Romney Marsh and in view of the distance from other town centres, it is important that the retail function, especially any convenience stores are protected. Taking into account the importance of the centre to the local community it is felt that the provision of A1 retail shops should not be significantly decreased. Therefore, Policy S6 will allow some flexibility by permitting a further 2.3% of non-A1 uses, however, in order to reduce any impact on the retail function, the concentration of such uses will be restricted.

POLICY S6 Proposals for development, redevelopment or change of use for Class A1, A2 or A3 (A4,A5) uses on ground floors in the [Shopping Area of New Romney](#), as defined on the Proposal Map, will be permitted unless they would either:

- a) create a continuous frontage of three or more non-A1 units; or
- b) result in more than 45% of the total length of street frontage in the Shopping Area being in non-A1 use.

Proposals for development, redevelopment or change of use of ground floor units in New Romney Shopping Area to any other use class will only be allowed where it is demonstrated that they are appropriate to the character of the shopping area.

Local shopping areas

5.27 There are a number of shopping areas within the district, which are particularly important in fulfilling local needs as convenience centres. One of these is along Cheriton High Street which is especially vibrant, with a low vacancy level and a range of retail, service and restaurant / takeaway outlets. Although the retail offer is good the shopping environment is generally poor and could benefit from improvement. The measured frontage of Cheriton shopping area is 818m. It is the only local centre to have maintained a particularly high number of retail convenience stores, including a greengrocer, butchers and bakers as well as banks, a post office and services such as hairdressers and chemists. Cheriton serves a large local population within walking distance and is therefore especially important for the less mobile.

5.28 However, there has recently been a growth of hot food take-aways locating in the shopping area, which have given cause for concern. There are currently 13 units within the shopping area with A3 use, of which 8 attract take-away trade and planning permission exists for a further 2 units. Hot food take-aways can cause noise and smell problems and due to the proximity of residential properties to Cheriton Shopping Area, these uses can have a detrimental effect on amenity.

5.29 For these reasons, the District Council wishes to restrict the number and concentration of A3 uses in the main shopping area. At present, 11.4% of the shopping frontage could be used as A3 use and it is considered that there are limited new opportunities for further A3 uses. For this reason, Policy S7 still seeks to maintain a mix of A1, A2 and A3 uses within the shopping area yet seek to restrict the concentration of A3 uses and restrict the frontage in A3 use to a maximum of 13%.

POLICY S7 Within the [Local Shopping Area of Cheriton](#), as defined on the Proposal Map, proposals for development, redevelopment or change of use for Class A1, A2 or A3 (A4,A5) uses will be permitted unless they would either:

- a) create a continuous frontage of three or more A3 units; or
- b) result in more than 13% of the total length of street frontage in the Shopping Area being in A3 use.

Proposals for development, redevelopment or change of use of ground floor units in Cheriton Shopping Area to any other use class will only be allowed where it is demonstrated that they are appropriate to the character of the shopping area.

5.30 Other important local shopping centres include Hawkinge, Lyminge, Lydd and Dymchurch and operate serving a local community but in direct competition with the larger town centres of Folkestone, Hythe and New Romney and also the larger food supermarkets. It is desirable to maintain a good choice of shops and services within these centres and therefore, proposals for change of use which would result in a loss of an A1 retail unit will be judged against Policy S8 below.

Local centres, village shops and rural pubs

5.31 Local shopping parades, village shops and rural pubs all provide a vital role in many of the districts rural communities. They offer a convenient service, reducing the need to travel to urban centres and often provide for daily needs especially for the elderly, the less mobile and families without a car.

5.32 Many of the village shops and rural pubs in Shepway have closed in recent years, and a number have been converted to residential use. It is important to consider how such a loss affects the local community and what choice and range of facilities would remain. There is also a need to protect local centres as well as individual shops, as they provide local choice of services and an alternative to travelling to the nearest town centre for every day requirements.

5.33 Although the Council does recognise the importance of market forces and that the viability of such services can depend on local people continuing to use them, the Council wishes to support and seek the retention of the facility. For these reasons, change of use applications which would result in a loss of Class A1 retail unit or public house in villages and rural settlements, will be resisted unless suitable justification is given. Regard will be given to the availability of alternative facilities in the village or centre, any genuine attempts to market the premises and the period of vacancy. Although this will depend on the present market condition, a period of less than six months marketing will not be acceptable.

5.34 The provision of additional shopping facilities will be encouraged where justified by local demand. Specific proposals for an improvement of local shopping facilities at Hawkinge are put forward in conjunction with the proposals for residential development in Chapter 3 Housing.

POLICY S8 Where a shop or public house is the last such remaining facility within a local centre, village or rural area, the change of use to any other use class will not be permitted unless suitable justification based on trade potential and continued viability is given. The District Planning Authority will grant planning permission for proposals for new local shopping facilities related to local shopping requirements. Any facility should be appropriate in scale, and design to its location.