

SHOPPING

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SHOPPING

Introduction

- 5.79 Retailing patterns over the last two decades have undergone great changes, the most apparent being the move out of town of food superstores and retail warehouses, and the development of regional shopping centres such as Lakeside at Thurrock and Bluewater at Dartford.
- 5.80 The national trend towards out of town and out of centre shopping has been mirrored in Hastings. There are three modern food superstores with only one being located near to an established shopping area. Retail warehouses have also developed over recent years. The largest group is just outside the Borough, the Ravenside Retail Park at Glyne Gap between Hastings and Bexhill (with 8 stores, including a superstore, totalling 15,000 sq.m – or 161,000 sq.ft) and three more within the Borough boundaries.
- 5.81 Against this difficult background, Hastings town centre also had the disadvantage of falling behind other competing centres in the region. However, with the opening of Priory Meadow Shopping Centre and associated pedestrianisation schemes during 1997, the town centre's fortunes have improved substantially.
- 5.82 The impact of regional shopping centres on Hastings has been only slight. Bluewater and Lakeside tend to act as an alternative to central London as a destination for occasional special shopping trips, rather than competing directly with nearer centres. The same would appear to be true of the more recently opened designer outlet centre at Ashford.

Shopping and Sustainability

- 5.83 The location of shops can have a significant effect on the length and frequency of journeys people make. In the Hastings context,

the need to travel to Eastbourne or Tunbridge Wells has, in the past, been increased by the poor range and quality of shops that used to exist in the town centre. The opening of Priory Meadow has reduced this need to travel to other towns.

5.84 Within the Borough, the location of large stores outside established centres has two effects:-

- (i) Separate journeys are necessary – whereas combined shopping trips are more likely when stores are situated within existing centres.
- (ii) Established centres tend to be better served by public transport which offers more of an alternative to travelling by car.

5.85 Support for the established centres in Hastings, particularly the town centre, is therefore a means of reducing the need to travel by car and an important component of sustainable planning.

The Government View

5.86 In its planning policy guidance, the Government now acknowledges the need to support town centres and contain the growth of out of town retailing. Planning Policy Guidance Notes 6 and 13 (on ‘Town Centres and Retail Developments’ and ‘Transport’ respectively) lend strong support for the principles of sustainability.

The Shopping Centre Hierarchy

5.87 The role of centres in Hastings is:-

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| Hastings Town Centre | - | sub-regional centre |
| St Leonards (including Marine Court) | - | district/speciality centre |
| Old Town | - | speciality/local centre |
| Silverhill | - | district centre |

| | | |
|------------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| Ore | – | district centre |
| Bohemia | – | local/speciality centre |
| West St Leonards (Bexhill Road) | – | local centre |
| Battle Road | – | local centre |
| Mount Pleasant | – | local centre |
| Mount Road | – | local centre |

The Shopping Strategy

5.88 The Local Plan aims to pursue the following principles:-

- (i) Continue to give priority to actions which support Hastings town centre.
- (ii) Encourage a wide variety of land uses and activities in the town centre.
- (iii) Seek continuing retail investment in the town centre.
- (iv) Resist retail proposals which could have a detrimental effect on the vitality and viability of the town centre and other district and local centres.
- (v) Support district and local centres.
- (vi) Promote improvements to the environment, traffic management, safety and access in all the main centres.

Hastings Town Centre

- 5.89 Hastings town centre is the largest shopping centre in the Borough by some margin. It has a floorspace of about 93,000 sq.m (1,000,000 sq.ft.) including the 28,000 sq.m (300,000 sq. ft.) at Priory Meadow. It is also the only shopping centre with a significant representation of multiple stores. The range of other activities – offices, entertainment and civic – further distinguishes the town centre from other centres in Hastings.
- 5.90 The Council's main priority for the last decade has been to bring about the regeneration of the town centre to enable it to fulfil its role as the sub-regional centre for the area, serving both the Borough and a wider catchment population. Its continued regeneration is viewed as a vital economic development objective.
- 5.91 The completed package of pedestrianisation and highway improvements, and the Priory Meadow shopping scheme, have transformed perceptions of the town centre. The continuing aim is to build on the success of the centre and consolidate its strength with further retail and other improvements during the Plan period.
- 5.92 However, there is usually a 'roll-over' period that follows the opening of a centre of this kind. Studies suggested that vacancies were likely to rise over the following two to three years before demand gradually caught up with supply. Any surplus vacant space is expected to be absorbed by growing retail demand by 2004/2005, and new floorspace may be required before the end of the Plan period in 2011 if this growth in demand continues.
- 5.93 The Borough Council will continue to welcome further complementary retail provision in the town centre. However, in view of the forecasts above, it was considered that planning policies should resist any proposals for further retail floorspace for non-food (comparison) goods which could be in direct competition with town centre retailing in the period up to 2004/2005. This consideration applies equally whether the proposal be located on the edge of the town centre or elsewhere within the built-up area of Hastings.

POLICY S1

Town Centre Retail Proposals

Within the town centre*, planning permission will be granted for retail uses within the shopping core (primary shopping area) as set out on the Proposals Map.

Retail development may be permitted elsewhere within the town centre provided it complements or contributes to the vitality and viability of the established shopping core and meets the criteria for edge-of-centre development set out in Policies S4 (and S5 if applicable).

Proposals for retail development elsewhere that would undermine the existing shopping core will not be permitted.

** Note: for the purposes of this policy, the term "town centre" refers to the area included on the Town Centre Inset Map.*

- 5.94 More detailed policies relating to the town centre are contained in Chapter 11a 'Hastings Town Centre'.

District and Local Centres

- 5.95 It is important to assist the smaller centres in the town. They provide convenient district and local level facilities as well as in some cases being valuable for specialist services such as lighting, locksmiths and TV repairs. They are a sustainable form of shopping.

- 5.96 In order to protect the role of district and local centres within the shopping hierarchy, the Council will seek to ensure that the key retail frontages indicated on the Proposals Map are retained for predominantly A1 uses (shops). Planning applications for other uses, particularly A2 (financial and professional services) and A3 (food and drink) uses may be permitted in these areas, but only provided that they would not either individually, or cumulatively with other recently completed developments and outstanding

planning permissions, be likely to undermine the primary retail function of these areas.

- 5.97 St Leonards serves a broader function than other district centres. Though smaller, it is similar in character to Hastings town centre in the amount of offices and small businesses associated with it and needs some policy protection as a result of the strong competition from the town centre. It is also a speciality centre with the antique shops in Norman Road and a good number of restaurants.
- 5.98 The main speciality centre in the Borough is the Old Town with its craft and antique shops and the restaurants. Bohemia also contains a concentration of antique/second hand shops.
- 5.99 Silverhill and Ore are the other two district centres. They rely on a good range of local convenience stores and, in particular, the presence of supermarkets.
- 5.100 The local shopping areas at West St Leonards (Bexhill Road), Battle Road, Mount Pleasant and Mount Road include post offices and a more limited range of local convenience stores serving their immediate neighbourhoods.
- 5.101 The Council will support and promote appropriate environmental and highway improvements to help make district and local centres more attractive and convenient as places to shop and visit.

POLICY S2

District and Local Centres

The key retail frontages defined on the Proposals Map will be protected for predominantly A1 retail uses. Within these areas, planning permission will be granted for new retail development provided that it would not:-

- (a) conflict with Policy S1; or
- (b) result in inconvenience and/or danger on the public highway;
or
- (c) harm the character and appearance of the frontage.

Planning permission for other uses will only be granted where they would not result in an over-concentration of non-A1 uses and would maintain or enhance the role of these areas as shopping centres.

5.102 The Bohemia shopping area has suffered from a high level of vacancies over a long period – especially in the southern section of Bohemia Road where there has been a gradual drift away from commercial to residential uses.

5.103 For a number of years, the Council has maintained a specific policy of protecting the existing retail uses within a defined shopping area along the north side of Bohemia Road between Upper Park Road and St Paul's Road and on the south side between North Road and Tower Road. A policy to this effect was included in the 1993 Hastings Borough Plan and it is considered that this should be retained in the new Local Plan.

POLICY S3

Bohemia Road Core Shopping Area

In order to protect the Bohemia Road Core Shopping Area, as identified on the Proposals Map, the ground floors of properties

will be retained in Use Classes A1–A3 (shops, financial and professional services and food and drink).

PPG6 – Need and the Sequential Approach

5.104 The Borough Council recognises that a need for new retail development may arise during the Plan period. Following the advice in PPG6, the Council will, as a matter of urgency, commission further work to provide an updated assessment of the need and capacity for additional retail floorspace within Hastings Borough during the Plan period. A key concern will be that any proposed development should complement existing shopping provision and should not harm the vitality and viability of the town centre or the district and local centres within the Borough.

5.105 Having established that a need for new development exists, PPG6 states that a sequential approach should be adopted to identify suitable sites. It states that all potential town centre sites should be thoroughly assessed before less central sites are considered for key town centre uses.

5.106 The PPG explains that adopting a sequential approach means that first preference should be given to town centre sites where suitable sites or buildings suitable for conversion are available. This should be followed by consideration of edge-of-centre sites, district and local centres – and only then out-of-centre sites in locations that are accessible by a choice of means of transport.

5.107 With this guidance in mind, the Borough Council has undertaken a search of suitable sites for retail development that might become available.

Town Centre Sites

5.108 Sites within the identified shopping core have been assessed for their potential retail use complementing those uses already existing in the town centre. No new sites have been identified as

being available and suitable for retail development, but the Borough Council will continue to encourage the occupation of vacant premises and will monitor the availability of sites during the Plan period. This will be particularly important as retail demand in the town centre grows during the later years of the Plan.

Edge-of-Centre Sites – Hastings Station Yard

- 5.109 Edge-of-centre sites are defined in the PPG as being within easy walking distance (i.e. 200–300 metres) of the primary shopping area, often providing parking that could serve the centre as well as the store. This enables one trip to serve several purposes.
- 5.110 The Hastings Station Yard has been identified as an edge-of-centre site for potential retail, leisure or employment development complementary to those uses already existing in the town centre, whilst according with Policy S1 above. This site is well related to the town centre and well served by public transport – thus reducing the need to travel by car and further encouraging the use of local buses and rail services to Hastings Station.
- 5.111 The site is expected to be developed during the Plan period. A more detailed discussion of the site is contained in Chapter 11a ‘Hastings Town Centre’.

District and Local Centres

5.112 The Borough Council considers these centres to be an important part of the total retail provision in the town – both in terms of the local communities they serve and the role they play in reducing the need to travel. The Council will therefore support additional retail provision in these centres through Policy S2 above.

5.113 However, an assessment of these centres has not revealed any sites in or adjoining these centres where additional complementary retail uses could currently be accommodated. If, however, such sites do come forward during the Plan period, the Council will support the development of suitable retail uses, subject to the normal planning considerations.

Out-of-Centre Sites

5.114 The Council is broadly opposed to the development of out-of-centre sites in the town leading to an increase in the need to travel and an adverse effect upon existing centres. This issue is addressed by Policy S4 below.

5.115 Due to the heavily developed nature of the Hastings urban area and the potentially adverse impact of such development, no further out-of-centre retail sites have been identified by this Plan.

5.116 If an out-of-centre development is proposed, the Borough Council will expect the developer to be able to demonstrate firstly, that there is a need for the type of development proposed and secondly, that all more central potential sites have been thoroughly assessed following the sequential approach advocated in PPG6.

Policies for New Retail and Leisure Proposals

5.117 PPG6 states that the key considerations with regard to new retail and leisure proposals outside existing centres are:–

- (i) The likely impact on the development plan strategy.

- (ii) The likely impact on the vitality and viability of existing town centres.
- (iii) The accessibility by a choice of means of transport.
- (iv) The likely effect on overall travel patterns and car use.

5.118 This has since been supplemented by further Ministerial Planning Guidance¹ stating that all proposals for new retail or leisure development outside existing centres which do not conform with an up-to-date development plan should be required to demonstrate both the need for additional facilities and that a sequential approach has been applied in selecting the location or site.

¹ *House of Commons written answer by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and Regions, dated 11 February 1999.*

5.119 The Council considers these criteria fit well with the local situation in Hastings, in view of the need to protect the town centre and other existing centres from undue competition and curb unnecessary car use and traffic congestion within the town.

POLICY S4

Retail and Leisure Proposals Outside Existing Centres

Planning permission for new retail or leisure development proposed outside existing defined shopping centres (in edge-of-centre and out-of-centre locations) will only be granted where it can be demonstrated that:-

- (a) no suitable alternative site exists within the existing defined shopping centres;**
- (b) there is a need for the proposed development;**
- (c) it would not cumulatively with similar recently completed developments and outstanding planning permissions have an adverse effect on the vitality or viability of Hastings town centre, St Leonards or other defined shopping areas, or**

undermine existing policies and proposals to regenerate these areas;

- (d) it would be accessible by a choice of means of transport other than the private car;
- (e) it would not result in unacceptable traffic impacts, in terms of highway congestion, access and car parking; and
- (f) it would not result in the sporadic siting of additional comparison shopping outside existing centres and along road corridors.

Major Shopping Proposals Outside Existing Centres

5.120 The Council considers additional controls are required for major new shopping proposals. Where major retail developments are proposed outside existing centres, the applicant will be expected to provide detailed supporting information demonstrating that the proposal will meet an identified need, and that the resulting shopping, transport and environmental impacts will be acceptable.

POLICY S5

Major Shopping Proposals Outside Existing Centres

All applications for out-of-centre and edge-of-centre retail development over 1,000 sq.m gross floorspace must be supported by retail impact assessments showing:-

- (a) evidence demonstrating how the proposed development will contribute towards meeting identified needs in the area;
- (b) evidence that the applicant adopted a sequential approach to site selection and the availability of suitable alternative sites;
- (c) the likely economic impact on Hastings town centre and the other district and local centres in the town – including consideration of recently completed developments and outstanding planning permissions;
- (d) the accessibility by a choice of means of transport – assessing the proportion of customers likely to arrive by different means;
- (e) the likely changes in travel patterns in the Hastings retail catchment area; and
- (f) any significant environmental impact.

Land Allocated for Non-Retail Uses

5.121 In view of the likely shortage of land within the Borough for housing, employment and other uses during the Plan period, the Council will resist retail development on sites allocated for other uses.

POLICY S6

Land Allocated for Non-Retail Uses

Planning permission will not be granted for retail development on land allocated on the Proposals Map for industrial/employment development, housing, playing fields or open space.

