

Traders Event, Town Hall, 8th June 2010, 6.30-8.00pm

On Tuesday 8th June the Council held an evening meeting in the Town Hall with Town Centre traders to discuss future retail floorspace needs up to 2026. The object of the meeting was to gather traders' views and ideas about how we might best meet this need. This event follows on from the wider 'Big Map' consultation carried out in Feb/Mar of this year.

30 traders attended the session; appendix 1 attached to this note, provides a list of those who attended the session.

Council Officers present: Simon Hubbard, Director Regeneration & Housing, Tim Cookson Borough Planning Officer, Jane Jackson Planning Policy Manager, Kerry Culbert, Senior Planner

The session started with a short introduction from Tim Cookson, Borough Planning Officer. Mr Cookson explained that the Council, with assistance from the Town Centre Manager, had distributed approximately 850 leaflets to town centre traders, highlighting the purpose of the session and inviting traders to attend. The Council was aware, however, that not everyone had received notification of the event in time, and that should it be necessary, the Council would be happy to run another session.

A power point presentation was made by Brian Harrison, retail planning advisor to the Council, who provided a summary of the recent update work around the original forecasts for future shopping floorspace needs identified in the 2006 Knight Frank Retail Capacity Report. A second presentation was made by Dick Harman, planning advisor to the Council, on the results of Town Centre site options the Council has been exploring in order to meet the Town's retail needs over the coming years to 2026.

A question and answer session followed these presentations, a record of these are included here. Please note questions (prefixed with a 'Q') and comments (prefixed with a 'C') have been paraphrased.

Question & Answer Session

Q1: Wouldn't Priory Quarter provide a better retail space?

Answer: This site is part of the Sea Space Priory Quarter development for education/office/leisure uses. There will be some retail development included but it will not be prime shopping because of the location at some distance from the core shopping area.

C1: The Masterplan for the development of Priory Quarter did build in flexibility around the level of floorspace that might be given over to office and retail space. This doesn't appear to have been reflected in the site search work.

Answer: We will hold further discussions with Sea Space on this matter.

Q2: How much space will be provided through the expansion of Priory Meadow?

Answer: Approximately 1,500 sq.metres. The contribution arising from the development of a mezzanine level at Priory Meadow will be helpful in meeting needs to 2012, but it won't be enough to fulfil future requirements.

Q3: With regard to site H (this site mainly comprises the Morrisons store and its car-park. It also includes some properties fronting Queens Road and Waterworks Road) - if people are inherently lazy will they really be prepared to walk all the way along Queens Rd from the existing shopping core? Site H is disjointed and Queens Rd suffers from traffic congestion.

Answer: Of all the sites considered at this stage, site H (Morrisons) represents the only serious contender in terms of potentially meeting floorspace needs. Although it is not ideally located, it might be better to give consideration to the redevelopment of the Morrisons site. If successful, the site is close enough to the core centre not to have a disproportionate impact and would give the Council added strength in fighting off shopping developments elsewhere. It is agreed that pedestrian access is the main problem with the site and improvements will be required.

Q4: During the Big Map consultation in March we were told then that the amount of floorspace needed was equivalent to 2 Priory Meadows. Why has this changed?

Answer: There has been no change, during the Big Map consultation we said 30,000 sq.metres was roughly equivalent to another or a 2nd Priory Meadow.

Q5: Do we have a commitment from the Council Leader that we will have no out of town shopping developments?

Answer: If we are to resist out of town development, including in neighbouring Rother, we need to be able to demonstrate that there is a potential area for development close enough to the existing core centre. This would give the Council added strength in fighting off shopping developments elsewhere.

C2: The one factor that would help everyone, retailers and shoppers alike, will be to sort out Bexhill Road.

Answer: The Council is continuing to lobby for road improvements that will benefit the Town.

C3: The seafront site (site I) would be the best option. (Site I comprises the Council's car-park on the seafront opposite Pelham Crescent).

Answer: Sea Space put forward a scheme to develop the site for office, hotel and leisure uses some years ago. It is not considered that this site is suitable in locational and townscape terms for a shopping development. It is somewhat removed from the core shopping area and is a prominent sea-front site. Ground floor shopping with parking above would be difficult to assimilate aesthetically

C4: Concentrating new development around Debenhams, The Memorial and developing the Observer Building would be a good approach. Site H is too far way and won't get the pedestrian footfall it would need to be successful.

Answer: The floorspace potential offered through the redevelopment of the Observer Building is too small.

C5: Car parking provision and the strict parking regime makes things difficult for shop owners and shoppers alike. More & cheaper parking is needed on the seafront. The area around Pound Stretcher, the Friday Ad building & Woolworths looks awful. The area needs tidying up and cleaning up. The underpass area is unfriendly, and the ATOS health care centre located adjacent to cinema is not ideal in this prime shopping location.

Q6: How much new floorspace could be potentially available from sites A, B, C, D & F combined?

Answer: The net floorspace that could be accrued from redeveloping these locations would be insufficient to meet future needs.

Q7: If the existing cinema were to be relocated and the site redeveloped how would this effect Queens Arcade (which is held in trust)?

Answer: Any redevelopment of the cinema site should be around Queens Arcade and more should be made of this attractive arcade.

C6: Land to the north of site A (this site is bounded by Queens Road, Stone Street, Portland Place and Castle Hill Passage) should be considered, there are empty shops and the area looks tatty. The proposed Sainsburys at Rye is likely to deter shoppers from Rye who would otherwise come to Hastings.

Answer: A lot of individual shop units would have to be acquired, and redevelopment would result in little net gain.

Q8: Why has the potential growth in internet shopping not been taken into account?

Answer: It has, in fact future floorspace needs would be greater than 30,000 square metres if the growth in internet sales wasn't taken into account.

C7: A big problem for small businesses in Hastings is the cost of business rates. There are few shop units with a rateable value of less than £18K. How can we encourage smaller traders to take up existing small shop units and won't small traders be priced out of occupying new development?

Answer: This issue is being followed up by Council officers and the people who asked the question will receive a response in due course.

Q9: What is happening to the ESK building?

Answer: This site is part of the Sea Space Priory Quarter development for education/office/leisure uses (site G). We are unaware of any plans currently for ESK to move. The latest phase of development, which is now underway, is to the rear of the Post Office. This is phase 2 of the University extension.

Q10: What will be the impact of developing site H (Morrisons) on the existing shopping area, has there been any analysis?

Answer: No analysis has been undertaken at this stage

Q11: Can we look at reducing permit parking at Pelham, these vehicles occupy valuable spaces needed by shoppers?

Answer: See response to Q12.

Q12: Why are Hastings parking charges the same as Brighton? The loss of free parking at Falaise Road has had a detrimental impact on small traders

Answer: (covering both of the above) – A separate meeting with American Ground traders which will cover issues around parking is to be held shortly.

Q13: Is there any potential offered by the White Rock, former bathing pool and the pier area?

Answer: There may be potential here for specialist retailers, though the floorspace potential is unlikely to assist in maintaining the viability of the Town Centre, which is some distance away.

C8: The predominance of estate agents in Havelock Rd has a detrimental effect in terms of drawing potential shoppers, especially those arriving by train, into the town centre.

Answer: These units have existing use rights, it is not possible to move occupiers.

Q14: Can the White Rock area be assisted, there is a lack of footfall in this area and some shop units have been vacant for 15 years?

Answer: There is the possibility that redevelopment of site H (Morrisons site) could draw trade away from the core shopping area. To prevent this, redevelopment within the core area should be encouraged and aimed at reinforcing the roll of the existing core area.

C9: The Council should be assisting smaller traders by reducing parking costs.

C10: The main problem facing the town centre is access and parking, we won't get businesses or shoppers into Hastings without addressing this issue. Developing site H will not address this fundamental barrier. Parking and the cost of parking is a major problem. This is a very hard issue to tackle.

Q15: Could the new library be located in Priory Square?

Answer: This could be explored with the County Council

Q16: Will there be planning controls to address over concentration of other uses & complementary uses, within areas such as Robertson Street.

Answer: Yes, this is something we will be exploring through the development of the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD)

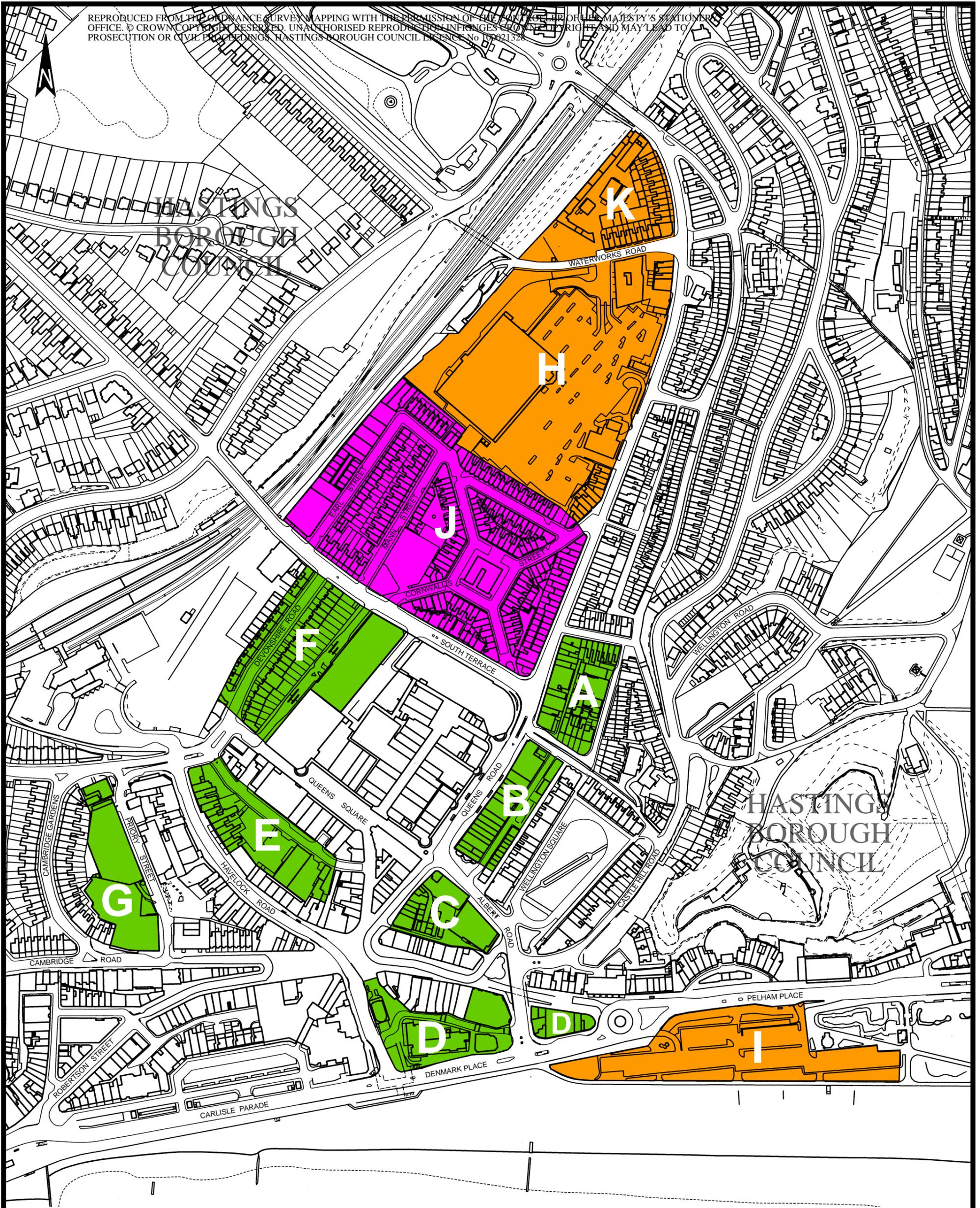
C11: Robertson Street has deteriorated as a result of making it one-way to traffic and later as a result of pedestrianisation.

Appendix 1

Attendance at Shaping Hastings Traders Event – 8th June 2010
6.30-8pm Council Chamber

Name	Company Name	Requested to add to database
Peter Armstrong	Imagine	Apologies received 07.06.10
Mrs Armstrong	Imagine	Apologies received 07.06.10
Mr David Palmer	The Tanning Company	√
Alla Skinner	as above	with above
Gordon Burgess	Hastings Sewing Centre	√
Josie Richards	Eco Magpie	√
Mel Pettifer	Magnifique	√
Cllr Jeremy Birch		n/a
Mr Richard Meikle	Shoe Shuffle	√
Norman Jacobs	Thimblinas	√
Lisa Jacobs	as above	with above

Mrs Sheron Hunt	EF HSY	√
John McCart	John McCart Architects	
Martin Condon	Trade Carpets	√
Victor Usher	Stace & Co.	
Helen Usher	as above	
Richard Moore	as above	
Mr P. Dalton	Dalton's Carpets & Furniture	
Miss Amanda Pearson	The Golden Girl	√
Ms Naomi Robinson (Marketing Exec.)	Sussex Coast College	√
Ms Judy Scott	Castle Ward Forum rep	√
Ms Catherine Parr	The White Rock Hotel	√
Richard Welsh	Claremont News	
P. Burgess		
Marcelo Bostamante	Thai Xperience	√
Cliff Meaden	Epic Life, Hastings Windsurfing Ltd	√
Gary Fellows		
Eldi Skuboy		
Marcia Bryant	Fruitique	√
Vandy Seng		√
David Brooks		
Mrs Vicki Duffey	Bullet Coffee House	√
Michael Hunt	Harnells Hastings	√



**Illustrative map presented
to Traders Event,
Town Hall
8th June 2010**



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