

CHAPTER 8

SHOPPING AND TOWN CENTRES

INTRODUCTION

- 8.1. Within the Borough there are four main shopping centres at Staines, Ashford, Shepperton, and Sunbury Cross. The largest is Staines which is a major shopping centre with a similar role to the shopping centres at Epsom and Woking. The Staines catchment area extends beyond the Borough boundary into Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and elsewhere in Surrey. Ashford, Shepperton and Sunbury Cross are smaller centres of more local importance.

POLICY CONTEXT

- 8.2. The policies and proposals of the Plan for shopping and town centres generally take account of national, regional and Structure Plan policy guidance as well as assessed requirements of the centres and any other relevant local circumstances. The relevant policy guidance of these higher order plans is set out in the following paragraphs.
- 8.3. National planning guidance, PPF6 “Town Centres and Retail Developments” (1996) has been published by the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR). The guidance emphasises a plan-led approach to promoting development in town centres and a sequential approach to selecting sites for retail and other key town centre uses based on giving first preference to town centre locations. It also advocates a range of positive policies to promote town centres and gives guidance on the assessment of retail proposals including the tests of impact on vitality and viability, accessibility by a choice of means of transport and impact on overall travel and car use. Transport considerations are also dealt with in PPG13.
- 8.4. The Government’s objectives on retailing are set out in paragraph 1.1 of PPG6:-
- to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres;
 - to focus development, especially retail development, in locations where the proximity of businesses facilitates competition from which all consumers are able to benefit and maximises the opportunity to use means of transport other than the car;
 - to maintain an efficient, competitive and innovative retail sector; and
 - to ensure the availability of a wide range of shops, employment, services and facilities to which people have access by a choice of means of transport.

- 8.5. The Structure Plan requires retail provision to be made to meet the needs of primarily Surrey shoppers and for this to be located primarily in town centres in a manner contributing to their character and role, so it provides a range of facilities which are accessible and convenient to all sections of the community, and would not lead to an overprovision of retail floorspace (Policy DP15). The focus of retailing primarily in town centres will assist development of public transport as an alternative to the use of cars. Limited provision in local centres is acceptable where this is compatible with the local environment and infrastructure. Local plans may make provision for a limited number of superstores in the County subject to no adverse impact on existing shopping centres and being accessible from the distributor road network (Policy DP16). Policy DP17 defines the role of town centres to be primary locations for shopping, social and community services, financial and commercial services and the leisure, recreation and cultural needs of the community. The policy also requires that, where appropriate, land will be identified for town centre activities. Policy DP18 requires policies and proposals which define and conserve the character of existing centres, encouraging as appropriate environmental improvement and accessibility, as well as providing opportunities for small scale activities and businesses providing local services. Further shopping floorspace needs in Staines are identified.

EXISTING PROVISION

- 8.6. Retail floorspace in the Borough is largely concentrated at present in the four main town centres: Staines, Ashford, Shepperton and Sunbury Cross. In addition to a number of in-town supermarkets, there are Tesco superstores at Sunbury, on the edge of the Sunbury Cross shopping centre, and adjacent to Ashford Hospital between Ashford and Stanwell, and a DIY store (Great Mills) at Stanwell Road, Ashford. There is also a large outdoor market held at Kempton Park, Sunbury, every Thursday. Outside of the 4 main town centres and the freestanding outlets noted above there are a number of local centres.
- 8.7. Beyond the boundaries of Spelthorne are a number of food superstores and non-food stores which serve the Borough residents. At the time this Plan was adopted these included:-

Food Sainsbury, The Causeway, Egham
 Sainsbury, Hampton
 Tesco, Feltham town centre.

These units, plus the superstores within Spelthorne, mean that all of the Boroughs population is within 10 minutes drive time of a superstore. In addition there are the following non-food stores in the wider area.

Non Food Homebase, The Causeway, Egham
 Homebase, Hampton
 Homebase, Walton
 Wickes, Hanworth
 Do It All, Walton
 Do It All, Weybridge.

- 8.8. The successful function of town and local centres is dependant not only on shopping provision but also on non-retail activities, social and community provision, public transport, parking, pedestrians, road users generally and the environment. To secure successful centres requires all aspects of a town's character and role to be taken account of in formulating appropriate policies and proposals.
- 8.9. The existing shopping provision is generally well located and accessible to meet the needs of the Borough's population with the main centres, particularly Staines, having good public transport facilities. Each of the main centres is a location for important social and community facilities and other non-retail activities which all contribute to the vitality of these towns. Proposals which seek to divert retail activity from town centres would therefore risk not only affecting their retail role but their wider functions. For this reason the Council will seek to maintain and enhance the role of existing centres. At the time this Plan was adopted a further retail study of the Borough was being carried out in response to a recommendation in the Local Plan Inquiry Inspector's Report and to ensure that up to date retail data is available to support the Council's policies.

TOWN CENTRE SHOPPING POLICIES

- 8.10. In line with the policy guidance set out in paragraphs 8.2 to 8.5 above, the aim of this Plan for shopping is:-

'To provide and maintain attractive and accessible shopping facilities to meet the needs of the local population as a whole'.

This will involve encouraging new retail development to be located in existing centres. The Borough Council's approach to proposals for out of centre retail development is set out in paragraphs 8.33 and Policy S8.

- 8.11. The following Policy, S1, sets out the Borough Council's general approach to supporting existing town and local centres. The Council will normally require any major retail development proposal to be accompanied by a retail impact assessment. In addition to the policy context set out in paragraphs 8.2 to 8.5, PPG6 states that local authorities should seek to retain post offices and pharmacies in existing local and district shopping centres, to ensure their easy accessibility to everyone.

POLICY S1

The Borough Council will seek to maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of existing centres by a combination of the following measures:-

- (a) **encouraging additional shopping development within existing centres which are well integrated to it and of a scale and nature appropriate to the existing role of the centre concerned or as proposed in this Plan**

- (b) **seeking to improve the environment of the centres including by the design of new development and necessary servicing facilities**
- (c) **maintaining and where appropriate seeking to improve the accessibility of centres to all sections of the community including disabled and elderly people**
- (d) **making suitable provision for non retail uses that contribute to the overall vitality of the centre whilst maintaining an appropriate balance between retail and non retail uses in the shopping frontage**
- (e) **resisting proposals that would undermine the vitality and viability of any existing centre.**
- (f) **resisting proposals which may lead to the loss of conveniently sited post offices and pharmacies, or which may prejudice their viability.**

In applying this Policy regard will also be taken of Policies BE17 and M1.

- 8.12. In support of the above policy the Council recognises the value of coordinating all the activities of the Council, and working closely with business interests in major town centres. This is often referred to as town centre management. A Town Centre Manager for Staines was appointed in 1998.
- 8.13. In the following sections each of the main centres is addressed in turn and cross reference is made as appropriate to other relevant sections of the Plan particularly Chapter 9 – Movement.

STAINES

- 8.14. Staines is the major shopping centre in the Borough, with a catchment area extending beyond Spelthorne. It is primarily a durable goods centre, but benefits from some food outlets and has a total retail floorspace at the time this Plan was adopted of some 75,000 sq. metres (807,300 sq. feet) (gross). Its primary shopping area is distinctive for its compactness and has the High Street as its focal point. The Elmsleigh Centre is located on the south side of the High Street and is a modern covered shopping complex. To the north of the High Street the Two Rivers retail development opened in October 1999 and will be complemented by the adjoining Tilly's Lane scheme on which work commenced in the March 2000. Completion is expected in Spring 2002. The town contains a significant secondary shopping area which serves to widen the choice in shopping provision and provide a range of ancillary facilities for shoppers. Parking provision is good with substantial surface and multi-storey car parking spaces located close to the main shops. As with most towns in the wider area there is some

traffic congestion at peak times, but the town does benefit from a by-pass. Through traffic was removed from the section of the High Street between Debenhams and the Iron Bridge in October 1999 with the opening of the two-way traffic scheme in Thames Street and South Street. There is good access by bus to the town centre but the quality of access by rail is affected by the distance of the station from the shopping area. Policy M2 aims to improve the attractiveness of the station and links between it and the town centre. The western end of Staines is covered by a fairly extensive conservation area, which signifies the special architectural and historic interest of the locality. The River Thames on the fringes of the town centre contributes significantly to the local environment and the Council adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance a Strategy and Planning Brief in March 2000 for its further enhancement.

- 8.15. The Borough Council wants to maintain the importance of Staines as a shopping centre and ensure that the retail provision is set within an attractive centre. In 1994 retail consultants Healey and Baker were appointed to advise on retail provision in the town for the Plan period. It was concluded there is capacity in retail expenditure terms for up to 39,000 sq. metres or 420,000 sq. feet (gross) of durable conventional shopping floorspace by 2006 and this was essential to maintain the town's attractiveness.
- 8.16. The Two Rivers and Tilly's Lane developments meet part of this requirement by providing between them a comprehensive retail and leisure scheme including larger retail units equivalent in size to what are often called retail warehouses, a multiplex cinema, a shopmobility facility, rear access and servicing for High Street properties, parking and effective integration with the rest of the town centre with pedestrian links at Norris Road, Tilly's Lane and Church Street. Further details are provided in Proposal P16 which is now substantially implemented. The Two Rivers scheme now means the town centre has a retail floorspace of 75,000 sq metres and the Tilly's Lane scheme will add a further 6,800 sq. metres of net retail floorspace providing a total town centre retail floorspace of 81,800 sq. metres (880,500 sq. feet).
- 8.17. Further scope for retailing exists by extending the existing Elmsleigh Centre westward to link with Debenhams (Proposal P17). Such a scheme could provide about 9,000 sq. metres or 100,000 sq. feet (gross) of conventional retail floorspace and provide greater shopping choice. Compulsory Purchase powers may be necessary to secure implementation of this scheme.
- 8.18. The following Policy sets out how the Council proposes to secure the enhancement of the attractiveness of Staines as a shopping and business centre. Since preparing the Draft Local Plan significant progress has been made in implementing the Policy.

POLICY S2

The Borough Council will seek to enhance the attractiveness of Staines Town Centre and its role as a shopping centre and business centre by:-

- (a) encouraging a major comprehensive retail development on the north side of the High Street, which may include an element of retail warehousing, and which will secure rear access and servicing for existing properties (see Proposal P16)**
- (b) encouraging an extension of the Elmsleigh Centre (see Proposal P17)**
- (c) seeking to secure implementation of the movement measures arising from the Staines Movement Study (see Proposals P18 and P19)**
- (d) undertaking environmental enhancement of the town centre as a whole**
- (e) generally resisting the loss of retail floorspace.**

8.19. A twice weekly market operates in the now pedestrianised High Street having relocated from Market Square in March 2000.

8.20. The continued predominance of retailing in the town centre particularly within the core area, is fundamental to the future vitality and viability of the centre as a whole. Change of use of individual retail units or loss by redevelopment would cumulatively weaken the retail function and will therefore be resisted. A more flexible approach is appropriate for the secondary shopping frontages. Within these parts a higher level of appropriate non-retail uses will be allowed, subject to retailing not being undermined as a prime activity in the town centre and concentrations of non-retail uses being avoided. It may also be appropriate, within the context of the redevelopment proposed for the north side of the High Street, to allow an element of restaurant use, particularly in the link areas to the High Street.

POLICY S3

Within Staines Town Centre, proposals for the change of use or redevelopment of existing premises within Class A1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order will be assessed against the following criteria:-

- (a) Within the High Street section of the core area to maintain the retail frontage length to at least 80% and to resist the**

loss of retail frontage in the Elmsleigh Centre (area shown as A on Inset Map No.1)

- (b) Within the secondary shopping frontages (Area B of Inset Map No.1) the loss of Class A1 Retail Units will be approved where:-**
 - (i) The proposal is for a use within Class A2 (Financial and Professional Services), or Class A3 (Food and Drink), or is for a launderette; and**
 - (ii) no more than four out of nine consecutive units within the secondary area are in non-retail use as a result of the proposal; and**
 - (iii) no more than two in any three consecutive units within the secondary area are in a permitted or existing non-retail use as a result of the proposal; and**
 - (iv) the proposal does not result in the loss of a retail unit that is prominent in the shopping centre either by reason of its size or position within the centre.**
- (c) In any redevelopment scheme, consideration will be given to the contribution of good quality restaurants to the vitality and viability of the town centre in the evening.**

In Policy S3 (a) the High Street section of the core area is intended to include units within the Tilly's Lane and Two Rivers developments fronting the High Street. The overall frontage length is the combined length of units fronting the High Street in the core area and excludes gaps for entrance ways and entrances to upper floors. Allowing for the outstanding permission for the Tilly's Lane development the retail frontage length is calculated to be 75.4% at December 1999.

- 8.21. The assessment of the ratio in Policy S3 (b) will be on the basis of the nine units centred on the application site. This will allow an assessment of the impact of a proposed change of use on a reasonable section of frontage. However, where a unit is towards the edge of a shopping area there may not be four units on both sides within the shopping area. In such cases the criterion will still apply but the assessment will be based on the run of units within the secondary area most nearly centred on the application site and will relate exclusively to the secondary area. This note on the application of the policy applies to all similar policies for other centres in the Borough.
- 8.22. In achieving the form of town centre outlined above it will not only be of importance for the Council to encourage full implementation of the proposals but also to liaise

with the existing businesses in ensuring the town is managed in a way which secures the objectives outlined.

ASHFORD

- 8.23. Ashford is the second largest shopping centre in the Borough and is the nearest centre for a substantial residential area. It is linear in character running along Woodthorpe Road and Church Road. Much of the centre was developed in the 1960's taking the form of a series of parades fronting service roads. The centre contains a wide range of stores but lacks any large shops. It is primarily a convenience goods shopping centre with four supermarkets including Somerfield and Kwik Save. Generally the centre appears to be reasonably buoyant. The Tesco superstore at Ashford Hospital will have taken some trade but independent advice was that this should not significantly affect the town centre's vitality and viability, although the situation will be monitored. Free parking and good bus services are available and a comprehensive parking scheme in the various service roads and enhancement generally in late 1995 has helped to reduce the previous conflict between pedestrians and vehicles. There is scope for further improvement by owners of buildings by appropriate refurbishment and improvements.
- 8.24. The Borough Council wants to maintain the overall retail importance of Ashford though recognising changes will occur in respect of food shopping with the opening of the Tesco's at Ashford Hospital. The Council did identify in the 1991 Local Plan a need for a large modern supermarket in Ashford which could provide a wider range of goods, thereby meeting more fully convenience shopping needs. Because a site cannot be identified a specific proposal has not been included in this Plan, however, the Council will support any appropriate proposals which come forward.
- 8.25. To complement the above a suitable balance between retail and non-retail uses in the shopping area in Ashford Town Centre, as defined on Inset Map No.2 needs to be maintained. Paragraph 8.40 and Policy S11 refer to the scope for further retail development should any existing non retail/retail service uses no longer be required. The loss of retail uses to other activities will be controlled in the following manner and recognising the scope for a greater proportion of non-retail units in the Woodthorpe Road area. The assessment of the nine units referred to in Policy S4 (b) below will be on the basis of the nine units centred on the application site. However, where a unit is towards the edge of a shopping area there may not be four units on both sides within the shopping area. In such cases the criterion will still apply but the assessment will be based on the run of units within the secondary area most nearly centred on the application site.

POLICY S4

Within Ashford Town Centre (shown on Inset Map No.2) proposals for the change of use or redevelopment or existing premises within Class A1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order will not be permitted unless:-

- (a) **the proposal is for a use within Class A2 (Financial and Professional Services), or Class A3 (Food and Drink) or is for a launderette; and**
- (b) **no more than two out of nine consecutive units (four out of nine in the Woodthorpe Road area) are in non retail use as a result of the proposal; and**
- (c) **no more than one in any three consecutive units (two out of three in the Woodthorpe Road area) is in a permitted or existing non-retail use as a result of the proposal; and**
- (d) **the proposal does not result in the loss of a retail unit that is prominent in the shopping centre either by reason of its size, length of frontage, or position within the centre.**

In redevelopment schemes the total amount of retail floorspace and length of frontage should normally be maintained.

SUNBURY CROSS

- 8.26. The shopping centre at Sunbury Cross consists of two parts: “The Parade” on the north side of Staines Road West and “The Centre” off the south side of Staines Road West. There is a Tesco superstore adjoining the Centre and linked to it by a pedestrian route. The boundary of the shopping area is shown in Inset Map No.4 to the Plan. “The Parade” and “The Centre” form the established local shopping centre for Sunbury, although the majority of their trade comes from the Sunbury Common area north of the M3. “The Parade” is a generally successful group of small unit shops with free parking in the adjacent service road. “The Centre” is larger but has suffered from poor trading in the past.
- 8.27. A scheme for the refurbishment of Sunbury Cross Centre, including partial demolition, new parking and access arrangements was approved in March 1995 and has now been implemented. Subsequently Marks and Spencer, Boots and other retailers have opened units within the Centre. In addition, paragraph 4.78 of the Built Environment chapter of this Plan identifies the need for comprehensive environmental improvements in the Sunbury Cross area generally. The Council intends to produce a detailed study of the area as a first step to securing such comprehensive improvements.

POLICY S5

Any redevelopment of all or part of “The Centre” must:-

- (a) **enhance the viability and vitality of Sunbury Cross Shopping Centre as a whole**

- (b) **have appropriate access, parking and servicing arrangements**
- (c) **enhance the appearance of “The Centre” and attractiveness of Sunbury Cross as a whole.**

8.28. Changes of use from retail in “The Parade” will be strictly controlled to protect the centre’s shopping role, avoid concentrations of non-retail uses and reflect the greater scope given to non retail activities in “The Centre”. The assessment of the nine units referred to in Policy S6(b) below will be on the basis of the nine units centred on the application site. However, where a unit is towards the edge of a shopping area there may not be four units on both sides within the shopping area. In such cases the criterion will still apply but the assessment will be based on the run of units within the secondary area most nearly centred on the application site.

POLICY S6

Within Sunbury Cross as a whole (shown on Inset Map No.4), proposals for the changes of use of existing premises within Class A1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order will not be permitted unless:-

- (a) **the proposal is for a use within Class A2 (Financial and Professional Services), or Class A3 (Food and Drink) or is for a launderette; and**
- (b) **no more than two out of nine consecutive units are in non retail use as a result of the proposal; and**
- (c) **no more than one in any three consecutive units is in a permitted or existing non-retail use as a result of the proposal; and**
- (d) **the proposal does not result in the loss of a retail unit that is prominent either by reason of its size, length of frontage, or position within the centre.**

In redevelopment schemes the total amount of retail floorspace and frontage should normally be maintained unless there are clear benefits to the retail role of Sunbury Cross as a whole.

Within “The Centre” change of use to B1a (offices) will also be allowed subject to the above criteria on the overall number and juxtaposition of non-retail uses.

SHEPPERTON

- 8.29. Shepperton serves the southern part of the Borough. It is primarily a convenience centre with two supermarkets (Budgens and Kwik Save). It benefits from free parking and the environment is good. The Borough Council wishes to maintain the existing shopping provision with a suitable balance between retail and non-retail uses. There is considerable opportunity for on-street parking which, with existing off-street parking areas, assists the convenience of the centre. Some conflict between vehicles and pedestrians exists which is being addressed. Further opportunities will be sought for environmental improvement to assist the existing attractiveness and popularity of the centre.
- 8.30. To ensure maintenance of the existing shopping role of Shepperton, the loss of retail units and concentrations of non-retail uses will be carefully controlled as set out below. The assessment of the nine units referred to in Policy S7 (b) will be on the basis of the nine units centred on the application site. However, where a unit is towards the edge of a shopping area there may not be four units on both sides within the shopping area. In such cases the criterion will still apply but the assessment will be based on the run of units within the secondary area most nearly centred on the application site.

POLICY S7

Within Shepperton Town Centre (shown on Inset Map No.3) proposals for the change of use or redevelopment of existing premises within Class A1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order will not be permitted unless:-

- (a) the proposal is for a use within Class A2 (Financial and Professional Services) or Calls A3 (Food and Drink) or is for a launderette; and**
- (b) no more than two out of nine consecutive units are in non-retail use as a result of the proposal; and**
- (c) no more than one in any three consecutive units is in a permitted or existing non-retail use as a result of the proposal; and**
- (d) the proposal does not result in the loss of a retail unit that is prominent in the shopping centre either by reason of its size, length of frontage, or position within the centre.**

In redevelopment schemes the total amount of retail floorspace and frontage should normally be maintained.

OUT OF CENTRE RETAILING

- 8.31. The existing and proposed superstores in the Borough and those in the wider area are referred to in paragraphs 8.6 - 8.7 and in addition larger units have been provided within the Two Rivers scheme in Staines Town Centre. This provision is considered sufficient to meet the shopping needs of the Borough for this form of development. Proposals for any out of centre retail development including markets within or adjoining the Borough will be considered against Policy S8 set out below. This Council takes the view that, partly in view of the impact from superstores in the area already on existing centres, there are no appropriate sites in the Borough for out of centre retail development which would not further prejudice existing proposals in the Plan or an existing centre. The Council's preferred location for new retail development is in existing town or local centres; new development should be of an appropriate scale within these centres. The Council will seek to protect all existing town and local centres from adverse effects from out of centre development. Any proposal for a food superstore or other large retail development will be required to be accompanied by retail and traffic impact assessments.
- 8.32. Notwithstanding the views expressed above and a number of retail studies undertaken in the Borough since 1990, the Council has accepted the recommendation of the Local Plan Inspector that it should carry out a retail study of the Borough and allocate such sites as may be needed in accordance with the sequential approach in PPG6. (See also para. 8.9 above).
- 8.33. In applying Policy S8 proposals are taken to be proposals set out in Chapter 12 of this Plan and commitments are schemes which already have a planning permission or approval subject to the signing of a legal agreement. Reference in sub point (e) to other necessary uses is to apply to all other policies and proposals of the Plan which seek to retain existing uses of land including social and community facilities, recreation uses, and urban open space.

POLICY S8¹

Outside town and local centres, proposals for development for retail floorspace (other than for farm shops, nurseries and garden centres which are dealt with in Policies S15 and S16) will be assessed against the following criteria:-

- (a) It must be demonstrated that either individually or cumulatively with other existing or proposed retail development, it would not undermine the vitality and**

¹ Since the Public Inquiry into the Plan the Government has clarified in a Parliamentary answer how the issue of need should also be considered in determining retail or leisure schemes outside town centres on sites not already earmarked for such use. In such cases failure to demonstrate both need and the use of a sequential approach in site selection would normally justify refusal of permission

viability of any existing centre taking into account any proposals and commitments for its future development.

- (b) It must be in a location that is easily accessible by private and public transport, by cyclists and on foot and it must be demonstrated that it would contribute to a reduction in motor vehicle movements overall.**
- (c) It must be satisfactory in highway/traffic terms including adequate parking and servicing arrangements**
- (d) It must not result in any material harm to the amenities of residential properties in the area**
- (e) It must not result in the loss of any residential accommodation or any suitably sited industrial or commercial land or buildings or other necessary uses where their retention is important**
- (f) The layout and design of the development should ensure that it is accessible and convenient for use by all sectors of the community including those with disabilities**

Retail development will be permitted in out of centre locations where it can be demonstrated that a location within or failing that on the edge of an existing centre is not available.

In applying this Policy regard will also be taken of the objectives of Policies S1 and M1.

LOCAL SHOPPING CENTRES, SMALL PARADES AND SHOPS

- 8.34. Outside the four main town centres there are a number of local shopping centres and large parades. Over the past 30 years or so the provision of supermarkets and subsequently superstores have responded to abilities to travel and purchase in bulk as well as store fresh food. Consequently the role of local centres in meeting food shopping needs has changed. In many cases they only meet what is referred to as top-up shopping needs. The reduction in food retailing provision in such centres has coincided with a growth in premises providing financial services, estate agencies, take-away food and other specialist retail facilities. Government guidance emphasises that attempts to go back to past patterns of shopping are unlikely to succeed. Some centres successfully make the transition to a broader range of activities without abnormally high levels of vacant premises, but some do not. Within Spelthorne, Lower Sunbury is a centre that has appeared to struggle in this process through the economic recession of the early 1990s. Where appropriate the Borough Council will seek to assist all centres making such a transition by the following means:-

- (a) resisting the loss of retail premises by change of use
- (b) working with local traders in formulating practical measures to assist in maintaining and improving vitality.

Each area is different and measures to assist will vary but in most cases a combination of physical improvements, promotion and measures to attract appropriate uses for which there is a specific need are likely to form the core of any strategy. The following subsections deal with Lower Sunbury and then other centres, parades and isolated shops.

LOWER SUNBURY

- 8.35. The main retail area is The Avenue Parade in The Avenue comprising 11 units and in addition there are a number of individual shops nearby in Thames Street. Shopping and other commercial activities are an important element historically within Lower Sunbury. The environment of the centre is generally good with many historic buildings and much of the old village being within a conservation area. This environment is likely to improve with the implementation of a traffic calming scheme and other enhancement proposals. The centre has free parking.
- 8.36. As referred to in paragraph 8.34, above, the centre has showed signs of difficulty in making the transition from primarily a convenience centre to also include specialist retail uses – although many do exist. As a consequence the level of vacancies has been higher than found in other centres. The Borough Council has prepared an enhancement plan for the Conservation Area within which seeking to revitalise commerce is an important element. The enhancement measures proposed and progress to date are set out more fully in Chapter 4 – Built Environment at paragraph 4.64. In addition to physical improvements, revitalisation has concentrated on promotion and seeking to attract specific specialist uses.
- 8.37. To assist the centre it is considered that a more flexible approach to changes of use from retail is appropriate in Thames Street, recognising a major resurgence of food shopping is unlikely and that a stimulus to encouraging other retail uses, by more business uses generally being present, would be beneficial. Accordingly, whilst there is a presumption to retain retail uses in The Avenue Parade, in Thames Street a more flexible approach is adopted allowing changes between retail, restaurant and office uses, and also of residential units with a history of commercial use back to one of these commercial uses, subject to the criteria set out in Policy S9 below. It should be noted that the former Vienna Bakery site referred to in point (b) of the policy now has a bakery retail outlet in the former shop, a Chinese Restaurant in the former outbuildings to the rear and residential use on the upper floors.

POLICY S9

Within the Lower Sunbury shopping area (shown on Inset Map No.5) proposals for the change of use of premises for Class A1 (Retail), Class A2 (Financial and or Professional Services), Class

A3 (Food and Drink), Class B1a (Offices) will be permitted subject to the following criteria:-

- (a) The existing level of retail use Class A1 in The Avenue Parade must be retained**
- (b) Existing premises in Thames Street from the Magpie Hotel to The Castle Restaurant (inclusive) in Use Class A1, A2, A3 or B1a will normally be permitted to interchange between these classes, subject to proposals not resulting in the loss of the former Vienna Bakery site on the corner of The Avenue and Thames Street, which is considered prominent in terms of position and important to retain in retail use**
- (c) Residential properties with a history of permitted, authorised or established commercial use within the defined area will be permitted to change to either Class A1, A2, A3 or B1a**
- (d) Proposals for change of use from A1 to A2, A3 or B1a will be expected to retain existing shop fronts where these are considered to contribute to the character of the conservation area and to maintain an appropriate window display**
- (e) There must be no adverse effect in terms of amenity or parking**

Outside the areas referred to in (a) and (b) above Policy S10 applies.

OTHER CENTRES, PARADES AND ISOLATED SHOPS

8.38. There are 8 other local centres and parades with more than 10 units. These are:-

Stainash Parade, The Broadway, Staines	25
Clare Road, Stanwell	22
Staines Road West, Ashford	18
Edinburgh Drive, Staines	12
Laleham Road, Shepperton	12
Woodlands Parade, Ashford	11
High Street, Stanwell	12

8.39. The Borough Council consider it important to maintain these and other parades and isolated shops to meet local shopping needs. The loss of retail units and concentrations of non-retail uses will be carefully controlled as set out below. The assessment of the nine units referred to in Policy S10 (b) below will be on the basis of

the nine units centred on the application site. However, where a unit is towards the edge of a shopping area there may not be four units on both sides within the shopping area. In such cases the criterion will still apply but the assessment will be based on the run of units within the secondary area most nearly centred on the application site.

POLICY S10

Within local shopping centres and small parades outside of Town Centres and Lower Sunbury, proposals for the change of use or redevelopment of existing premises within Class A1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order will not be permitted unless:-

- (a) the proposal is for a use within Class A2 (Financial and Professional Services) or Class A3 (Food and Drink) or is for a launderette**
- (b) no more than two out of nine consecutive units are in non-retail use as a result of the proposal. In parades of less than nine shops the requirements shall be for not more than two units in total to be in non-retail use**
- (c) not more than one in any three consecutive units is in a permitted or existing non-retail use as a result of the proposal**
- (d) the proposal does not result in the loss of a retail unit that is prominent in the shopping centre or parade, either by reason of its size, length of frontage or position with the centre or parade**
- (e) in redevelopment schemes the total amount of retail floorspace and length of frontage should normally be maintained.**

There will be a presumption against the loss of isolated shops that meet a local need.

OTHER RETAIL ISSUES

RETAIL DEVELOPMENT WITHIN SHOPPING FRONTAGES

- 8.40. Within the main shopping areas, excluding Staines, there are certain uses such as the petrol filling station in Shepperton and the telephone exchange in Ashford which interrupt shopping frontages and do not contribute to the function of these centres. Where proposals come forward to redevelop such sites, uses within Use Class A1, A2 or A3 and social and community facilities for which there is a need and which contribute to the function of the Centre, will be encouraged.

POLICY S11

Proposals to redevelop the existing frontages of the retail areas of Ashford, Shepperton and Sunbury Cross, as defined on the inset plans, which are not currently in retail or related uses, will be acceptable subject to the other relevant policies of this Plan if they are for uses within Use Class A1, A2 or A3 or for social or community facilities which contribute to the vitality and viability of the centre.

SHOPFRONTS, SECURITY AND WINDOW DISPLAYS

- 8.41. Reference should be made to paragraphs 4.41 to 4.45 and Policies BE16, BE17, BE18 and BE19 on shopfronts and advertisements, and also to paragraph 4.79 and Policy BE28 on crime prevention measures. In any planning permission for a non-retail use in Class A2 or A3 in any of the Borough's shopping areas, a window display will be required.

POLICY S12

Any proposal for a non-retail use in Use Class A2 or A3 in any shopping area will be required to have a window display consistent with a shopping area and appropriate planning conditions to that effect will be applied.

RESTAURANT AND TAKE-AWAY FACILITIES

- 8.42. Proposals for restaurants and take-aways must comply with the policies of this Plan which set appropriate quotas for non-retail uses in shopping centres and local parades (Policies S3, S4, S6, S7, S10) and all other relevant policies of the Plan. The Borough Council is also concerned that such facilities do not adversely affect the amenities of adjoining uses by noise, smell or the visual appearance of external extraction and ventilation equipment. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate that there will be no adverse impact by way of noise or smells, including where permission is only being sought for change of use and formal approval of details is to be sought at a later stage. External extraction and ventilation equipment can be incongruous and unsightly and will be expected to be routed internally. Where this is not possible it must be fixed where it cannot be directly visible from any highway, must have no adverse impact on upper floors or any adjoining uses, and must be painted to be as unobtrusive as possible. Where proposals for restaurants and take-aways are acceptable in principle, they will normally be approved subject to conditions to control hours of operation, to avoid adverse impact on the wider area and to require maintenance of paint finishes to external extraction and ventilation equipment. Maintenance of the effectiveness of extraction equipment in preventing nuisance by smells is covered by Environmental Health legislation and will be monitored by the Borough Council's Environmental Health Officers.

POLICY S13

Restaurant and take-away facilities will be permitted where:

- (a) they comply with the relevant policy dealing with non-retail uses and the other policies of this Plan**
- (b) there will be no nuisance caused by reason of noise or smells**
- (c) they have appropriate sound insulation so as to avoid adverse noise impact**
- (d) ventilation/extraction equipment and ducting is routed internally; only where this is not possible will it be allowed externally and then must**
- (e) not be directly visible from the highway**
- (f) have no adverse impact on upper floors or adjoining uses**
- (g) be painted and maintained in a colour to minimise its visual impact**
- (h) there will be no adverse impact on highway safety.**

8.43. There are a number of specialised retail or related uses for which proposals arise from time to time and guidance is therefore included in this Plan. These are amusement centres, garden centres, nurseries and farm shops and are dealt with below. Any other forms of retailing proposals not covered specifically in this Plan will be considered on their merits against the general intentions of the Plan.

AMUSEMENT CENTRES

8.44. In recent years amusement centres have increased in popularity and have diversified. Whilst their use is not retail they are often best situated in certain parts of shopping areas in town centres. PPG6 notes that they are most appropriately sited in secondary shopping areas or areas of mixed commercial development but their location needs to be carefully considered. They are unlikely to be acceptable in primary shopping areas or close to housing, schools, churches or hospitals, and in conservation areas; and other places of special architectural or historic character. The Borough Council will assess proposals for amusement centres against the following Policy:

POLICY S14

Amusement centres will only be acceptable if they do not cause a detrimental impact in terms of noise, traffic, and character of the

locality, and are not close to houses, schools, churches or other uses and areas where they would be inappropriate.

GARDEN CENTRES, NURSERIES AND FARM SHOPS

- 8.45. There are many nurseries and farms wishing to sell some of their produce from the site and this may be done without the need for planning permission. The selling of produce and goods not produced on site may require planning permission. Such sites in Spelthorne are normally in the Green Belt and very special circumstances must be demonstrated if such development is to be permitted. At least 90% of goods sold should be those produced on site, but some flexibility in the policy may be exercised where goods are sold from an adjoining farm. The contribution of increased business to the viability of the farm and the extent to which this may assist in maintaining the appearance of a site appropriate to the Green Belt, will be a material consideration. Further details are provided in Chapter 2 - Green Belt.
- 8.46. In recent years many nurseries have been developed to become garden centres where the sale of produce grown on site is limited and the retail function has become the primary use of the site. There is no reason why most of the goods sold in the garden centres cannot be sold in normal shopping outlets in town centres, and indeed many are. There will therefore be a strong presumption against such facilities in the Green Belt and the extension of activity on existing sites.

POLICY S15

Proposals for farm shops and nurseries or their extension within the Green Belt will only be permitted where:-

- (a) at least 90% of goods sold are those produced on site**
- (b) any ancillary goods sold are directly related to the items produced and sold from the site**
- (c) the sales area is within an existing building**
- (d) adequate access and parking is provided**
- (e) there is no material impact on the openness of the Green Belt.**

Exceptionally a higher proportion of goods not produced on site may be sold, where it is demonstrated this is in support of the continued operation of farm or nursery which is considered important in maintaining the appearance of the site in a manner consistent with the Green Belt.

POLICY S16

There will be a strong presumption against new garden centres in the Green Belt. Extensions to existing businesses by way of land or building will only be permitted where they are essential for the sale of additional produce grown on the site.

SUMMARY OF SHOPPING AND TOWN CENTRES PROPOSALS

8.46. Chapter 12 - Implementation contains a schedules of all proposals contained in this Plan with relevant additional background information. Proposals which relate to the Shopping and Town Centres chapter are made for the following sites:

P16	Land north of Staines High Street
P17	Land west of the Elmsleigh Centre, Staines.
P18	High Street, Staines
P27	Site of Cinema and Riverside Restaurant, Clarence Street, Staines