

# City Management Plan workshop briefing notes

## Retail

### What are the issues?

Westminster contains a range of designated shopping centres, from the West End International Shopping Centre and part of Knightsbridge, through to other centres in the Central Activities Zone, and Major, District, and Local Shopping Centres spread throughout the city.

The West End is by far the largest retail location in the UK, with turnover greater than Manchester and Birmingham combined, and with nearly 5 times more retail floor space than the whole of Croydon. A key challenge for us is to accommodate the expected demand for retail growth in the West End as set out in the London Plan, whilst improving its retail offer and pedestrian environment in order to help maintain its competitiveness.

The Council wishes to protect the shops and services in each of its designated shopping centres. They are vital for local residents and can act as a focus point for community activity. Retail plays a vital role in Westminster's economy, with specialist shops contributing to local distinctiveness. Small shops can compete with national retailers/supermarkets through increased specialisation and quality of service, and by committing to customer loyalty. The Competition Commission are currently investigating the balance between large supermarket operators and individual traders.

### What have you told us?

- Questions were raised about the scale of development at the eastern end of Oxford Street, where some felt large units should be encouraged, and others felt a range of unit sizes should be encouraged within retail developments.
- Consultees felt that retail should be encouraged throughout the WESRPA, with specific reference to the eastern end of Oxford Street, as it was felt that more high quality shops and an improved retail environment would be beneficial. It was felt that retail should take priority over residential uses in this area.
- Concern was raised over the protection and provision of local/independent shops and services, and the need to appropriately balance uses. Consultees felt that development should reflect the characteristics of its surroundings, and that the council should recognise the importance of commercial retail within the CAZ.
- Through consultation on the Core Strategy Issues and Options document there was support for greater flexibility of uses in the Church Street and Harrow Road District Centres. This has been taken forward in the Draft Core Strategy.



City of Westminster

PLANNING & CITY DEVELOPMENT

6pm to 9 pm, 21st July 2009

17th floor City Hall - Committee Rooms 6 & 7

## Policy context

PPS6 Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres (2005) states that the Government's key objective for planning for town centres is to promote their vitality and viability. PPS6 states that this should be achieved through promoting and enhancing existing centres by focusing development in them and encouraging a wide range of services which are accessible to all.

London Plan policy 3D.1 encourages retail, leisure and other related uses in town centres and discourages them outside the town centres.

Table A1.1 sets out London wide Town centre classifications, with policy 3D.2 stating we should relate the scale of retail, commercial and leisure development to the size and role of a centre. Policy 3D.3 states we should prevent the loss of retail facilities.

Strategic priorities for the Central Activities Zone, including the requirement for the West End Special Retail Policy Area are set out in policies 5G.2 and 5G.4.

## Westminster's Approach

Westminster's West End Special Retail Policy Area (WESRPA) policy framework has been established to improve the West End's shopping environment and manage the issues affecting this unique part of the city. The area's most important shopping frontages of Oxford, Regent and Bond Streets have been designated 'Primary Shopping Frontages' by the council, where retail growth will be a priority. 'Oasis areas' will provide areas of rest close to these frontages but away from their hustle and bustle.

Along with anticipated demand for more shops in the West End comes increasing demand for more entertainment uses such as cafes and other activities. Demand for such uses is common throughout Westminster's designated shopping centres.

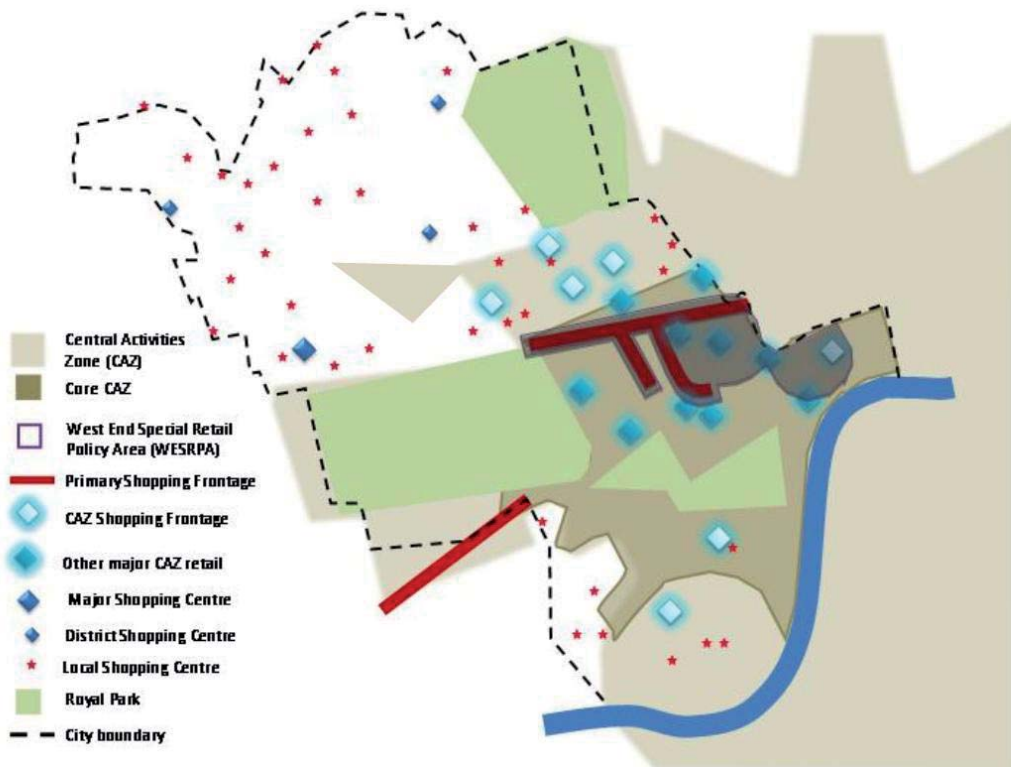
Although an overconcentration of these uses could undermine the retail function of a shopping centre, sensitively introduced complimentary uses such as restaurants, banks, libraries and other facilities can, where appropriate, help maintain activity in shopping centres and increase their overall attractiveness to visitors.

The Core Central Activities Zone (CAZ) is Westminster's main area of commercial activity and growth. The council has longstanding policies to ensure that new developments in existing shopping streets in the CAZ (as designated in the UDP), or in areas that would benefit from more shops and services in the CAZ, incorporate an appropriate number of shop-type premises. These developments should include at least the same amount of retail (including the same amount of A1 retail) as was there before. A similar approach is taken in designated shopping centres outside the Core CAZ.

Existing planning policies also seek to maintain the predominantly retail function of the Major and District Shopping Centres whilst accommodating other town centre uses in appropriate locations, and to protect the retail function of the Local Shopping Centres for the service they provide to residents, visitors and workers. Additionally, planning permission is not generally granted for change of use from an A1 shop use or launderette outside the designated shopping centres and CAZ.

Although licensed street markets are protected, and if necessary relocated as part of local development schemes, pavement shops that could cause an obstruction to pedestrians are generally not be allowed.

The Council will seek to continue with these approaches and improve the shopping environment throughout Westminster. One way to achieve this is through the protection of window displays. These should be maintained throughout Westminster's designated shopping centres to help sustain attractive and vibrant shopping frontages. Encouraging



activity back into vacant retail units could also help achieve this aim. This could include the temporary use of vacant units to encourage activity through times of economic decline.

Despite forecast demand for retail growth in Westminster, some of its designated shopping centres have high vacancy rates and have fallen into decline (see separate briefing note for the North West Westminster Economic Development Area). In the Harrow Road District Shopping Centre we propose to apply more flexibility in land use terms to encourage investment and more activity within the centre through the occupation of currently vacant units. This could result in more non-A1 activity, for example café uses and small businesses, to locate in this centre and increase the number of people visiting Harrow Road. A similar approach would be implemented in Church Street/Edgware Road. Allowing more flexibility for supporting uses could help revitalise the existing shopping centres. An indication of potential changes to the existing policy approach are set out in Appendix 1.

### Current Unitary Development Plan Policy 2007

Through current planning policy, there is a general presumption towards protecting existing shops, and providing new shops in development schemes where appropriate. Protection is also provided for individual shop-type units, street markets, and individual street trading pitches.

STRA10 seeks to enhance Westminster's shopping centres and maintain and increase the number and range of shops in the city.

STRA11 seeks to maintain and enhance the West End as a shopping centre of international importance whilst balancing the requirement for shopping with other activities that contribute to the character and function of Central London.

SS 1 and SS 2 protect town centre uses that provide services to visiting members of the public (such as shops, banks, estate agents and cafes).

SS3 seeks to enhance shopping in the Primary Shopping Frontages.

SS 5 – SS 7 aim to maintain the vitality and viability of Westminster's shopping centres, and encourage a balanced mix of appropriate street level activities.

SS 9 allows change of use of long-term vacant shops in peripheral locations.

SS 11 resists major new shopping/supermarket developments outside existing centres.

SS 12 resists minicab, motorcycle and other courier offices.

SS 13 protects street markets and individual trading pitches, whereas SS 16 resists pavement shops/kiosks.

SS 17 requires window displays.

## Core Strategy Publication Draft 2009 (subject to agreement)

The Core Strategy Publication Draft contains policies to protect retail throughout Westminster and sets out a hierarchy of designated shopping centres, including CAZ Shopping Frontages, where retail development will be focused. The retail policy aims to ensure that new retail development is appropriate for its location, and seeks to retain the number of shops and overall amount of retail floor space in Westminster. Shops and other public uses will be protected for the service they provide to visiting members of the public, rather than being allowed to change to private offices or residential. This will help maintain activity in the designated shopping centres.

In the Church Street/Edgware Road District Shopping Centres the Council may be more flexible in the protection of retail uses, where a proposed development would bring benefits to the local community. See separate briefing note for the North West Westminster Economic Development Area.

In addition, the Core Strategy Publication Draft contains a new policy for the West End Special Retail Policy Area (WESRPA) which seeks to maintain and enhance the unique status and offer of this area. Priorities for the WESRPA include: improved retail space; retail growth with complimentary service uses (such as banks) where appropriate; improved pedestrian environment, linkages, and access to public transport; and development of oasis areas of rest.

## Glossary

### A1 Use Class (A1 retail/shop use)

Shops - shops, retail warehouses, hairdressers, undertakers, travel and ticket agencies, post offices, pet shops, sandwich bars, showrooms, domestic hire shops, dry cleaners.

Central Activities Zone (CAZ) - area where the City Council envisages the maintenance or growth of Central London Activities including office uses,

shops, entertainment facilities, health uses, and other uses that provide a service to visiting members of the public.

District Shopping Centres - usually with up to one hundred commercial premises of various kinds, have a predominantly retail function. Situated outside of the CAZ, they ensure goods and services are accessible at a local level.

Local Shopping Centres - small shopping centres outside of CAZ, usually with convenience goods shops, local service uses, restaurants and pubs mainly providing facilities for people living or working nearby.

Major Shopping Centres - larger shopping and service centres, providing a mix of comparison and convenience shops, with some entertainment uses outside of CAZ. They tend to attract visitors from greater distances than the District and Local centres.

Non-A1 retail uses - comprise A2 financial or professional services, A3 restaurants and cafes, A4 drinking establishments (excluding nightclubs), and A5 hot food takeaways in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 and its subsequent amendments.

Retail - includes A1 and non-A1 retail uses (see above).

Use Class - refers to broad classes of land/building uses as defined by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended).

West End Special Retail Policy Area (WESRPA) is focused around Oxford, Regent and Bond streets to promote the strengthening, development and management of the West End as a retail centre of international, national and London-wide importance.

## Appendix 1

Proposed Major Shopping Centre policy approach:

Queensway/Westbourne Grove Major Shopping Centre Frontage	Minimum percentage of frontage to be in shop (A1) use (UDP January 2007)	Percentage of frontage in shop use (October 2006)	Proposed policy change
Core (1)	75%	60%	Minimum of 70% Core Frontage in A1-retail use
Secondary (2)	55%	32%	Minimum of 50% in A1-retail use

Proposed District Shopping Centre policy approach:

District Centre Frontage		Minimum percentage of frontage to be in shop (A1) use (UDP January 2007)	Percentage of frontage in shop use (October 2006)	Proposed policy change
Church Street / Edgware Road	1	80%	69%	Keep 80% percentage threshold to allow for development of Church Street / Edgware Road junction site
	2	55%	48%	No change to policy threshold
Harrow Road	1	70%	72%	Reduce target percentage to 60% to allow flexibility, and encourage activity
	2	55%	28%	Remove percentage threshold
Praed Street	1	N/A	N/A	Proposed new Core Frontage to include primarily A1 frontage around West End Quay
	2	55%	36%	Change percentage threshold in line with changes to the Core and Secondary Frontage designation
St John's Wood	1	80%	60%	No change as this centre is performing well
	2	55%	32%	No change

## Further Information

Adopted Unitary Development Plan (January 2007).

Core Strategy Publication Draft (July 2009).

Shopping Centre Health Checks (2002 and 2007).

Oxford, Regent, Bond Street Action Plan (March 2008).

The London Plan – Consolidated with Alterations Since 2004 (February 2008).

## Contact

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The agenda for the Retail part of the workshop is as follows:

### What should we do?

1. How can we improve Westminster's retail offer / shopping environment?

2. How can we accommodate anticipated growth?

3. a) What is an appropriate balance of uses along our high streets?

b) Is the balance right already or should we be more flexible in allowing complimentary uses in some or all of our shopping centres?

c) Should we prioritise particular types of non-A1 use classes and restrict others?

4. a) Should A1 shops (including ancillary floor-space, such as storage space) be protected at all floor levels in the designated shopping centres?

b) Should commercial uses, such as offices, be permitted on the upper floors above shop type premises in shopping centres or should they be used solely for retail uses and housing?

5. a) How can we support small/local/independent shops?

b) Should we encourage a range of shop sizes?

6. Should we continue to protect shops and services outside of our designated shopping centres?

7. What approach should we take for vacant shop units?

8. Are there any issues that have not been covered in the workshop that you would like to raise?

9. Are there issues that the Council should be aware of in its lobbying process?

1hr 20 mins