

WORKSHOP 5: PLANNING OBLIGATIONS AND RETAIL

Tuesday 21st July 2009, 3rd Floor, Westminster City Hall

Chairman: Councillor Moss

Facilitator: Lisa O'Donnell

Officer Panel: Hilary Skinner, Sara Dilmamode, Rachel Ferry-Jones, Margaret Handovsky, Mike Walton

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

<p>Comments from workshop attendees</p>	<p>Priority should be given to retail in section 106.</p> <p>A3 to A1 without permission is ok for some areas, but in St James, this might mean an A3 high class restaurant to an A1 coffee shop or sandwich bar. This doesn't give any assurances.</p> <p>Providing other uses above retail is more challenging especially in the Core Streets.</p> <p>It is also about creating the best space you can. Configuration of space is enabling especially at the East end of Tottenham Court Road.</p>
<p>Hendersons, Saville Row</p>	<p>Mayfair is a wonderful and exclusive part of London and the retail offer should reflect the people living in and visiting the area. If workshops become something else there will be no tailors on Savile Row.</p>
<p>Comments from workshop attendees</p>	<p>There has been clever use of very big spaces e.g. Regents Street and Abercrombie & Fitch. The more of these the better.</p> <p>In respect to the size of units, East or West [Oxford Street] needs to be considered.</p> <p>Consideration needs to be given to light pollution.</p> <p>Supportive of special retail policy are in terms of the nature and size of units. But in terms of mixing uses (offices, housing and retail) the focus should be on retail. Residential on the side streets but on the 3 mains streets the focus should be on retail.</p> <p>On primary shopping frontages retail should be the focus, but it needs to be the right type and mix of retail.</p> <p>There is a need for thinking around the Opportunity area, different conservation areas and multiple ownerships.</p> <p>Regent Street is a triumph. If the East of Oxford street is to approach those standards, conservation issues need to be relaxed. In the case of our own application WCC were reluctant about the double height space.</p>

	<p>In Regents Street, the buildings are often listed, but in East Oxford Street this is not the case. A second apple store is planned in Covent Garden; there are clear heritage and retail issues. The Street is changing; in Mount Street, Regent Street and Elizabeth Street you have the most significant role.</p> <p>There needs to be a balance between high street and independents stores. It is not just retail – how do people get around – it needs to be joint up.</p> <p>Bond Street is premiere street but with tiny floorplates. It is about how they've adapted. The public realm is Oxford street in "crap". There needs to be a balanced mixed of heritage and new to take John Lewis/ Selfridges scale to the other end.</p> <p>In terms of floorplates in Regent Street, the uses were inappropriate e.g. travel agents, but the floorplates worked well, there just needed a re-jigging of tenants. Bond Street was subject to redevelopment and now has a good balance.</p> <p>What is required is a mix of spaces, larger floorplates mixed with smaller ones.</p> <p>Although a lot of East Oxford's Street is not listed, they are in Conservation Areas, so very inappropriate pressures to create limits.</p> <p>Re ownership we have a role – a planning role in pushing public realm improvements.</p>
Cllr Moss	Retailer's desires and our aspirations for economic development and West End as a special area – it is on this we need to focus.
2. How can we accommodate anticipated growth? What approach should we take for vacant shop units?	
Comments from workshop attendees	<p>Looking long terms at changing shopping habits – e.g. internet shopping there may be few shops.</p> <p>Variety is the key. We don't want south Croydon! IF protection can be given to specialist areas like Savile Row and looking more widely, at other areas that are considerable centres of expertise and speciality. One example is Pimlico Road (Antiques); it would only take a small shift for this area to be destroyed. Some of the most vulnerable are where there are multiple land owners. The West end can't operate on big brand stores if its is to retain its allure, versus Bluewater and Westfield. It needs to offer small independents It gives a different feel to the shopping area.</p> <p>10 minutes east of Regents Street is Carnaby Street. This reinforces the overall function of the West End.</p>

	<p>Bring planning together with Town Centre Management. Often it is not a planning solution, instead it is marketing.</p> <p>In terms of lobbying priorities, if the local authorities could control tenants rather than use classes. We could lobby for these tools.</p> <p>In Regents Street – environment and public transport area key.</p> <p>In terms of small shops it is difficult to intervene in tenure representation a lot are full of independent. IF differentiated rents through planning obligations this may lead to different offers although this would need considerations as could be counter productive leading to unintended consequences.</p> <p>In St James’ a lot of building such as banks and retail changed to A3. This has changed the character of the area (supported by a study by the St James Trust).</p> <p>Anticipate growth and deal with vacant units linked to council policy on empty retail in a cultural context. Culture can play a particular role and can inform and lead to economic development. Examples in Kensington and Chelsea are Brompton Quarter exhibition space. Cultural uses maybe temporary but they may also enlist residents, graphic design businesses etc. It generates a particular atmosphere/ mood.</p> <p>Accepting alternative uses.</p> <p>Widening the spatial retail area; a wider setting and number of areas.</p> <p>Interesting questions on differentiation. Are showroom policies as relevant? For example around Margaret place – do we need to refresh the designation?</p>
Hilary Skinner	<p>Could there be a show of hands on whether the 18th month period for vacancies should be reduced:</p> <p><i>3 against</i></p> <p><i>8 for</i></p>
<p>3. 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?</p>	
Comments from workshop attendees	<p>Look beyond A class e.g. a walk in medical centre.</p> <p>Are you considering widening the scope of A1 uses in the Primary shopping frontages.</p> <p>The whole emphasis of primary frontages is retail. There are not a lot of vacancies on primary frontages. Is this driven by perception of what retailers want? Other centres accept A2 and there is no</p>

	<p>evidence of harm.</p> <p>Appendix 1 a good starting point. Centres play a different role in the hierarchy. For A1 on primary frontages is the correct one.</p> <p>Need to be careful about non A1 into primary frontage e.g. Kensington High Street where with the shift from a big unit to a bank and the sense from retailers is negative. Need to be careful about where they are and how the break it up. Fashion and shoe stores in particular like to be near.</p> <p>In 3 main streets, net loss of restaurant frees offers in department store or Oasis.</p> <p>Yes, can't do shopping over 3-5 floors also resi doesn't work office is the logical conclusion.</p>
<p>4. Should A1 shops (including ancillary floorspace, 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?</p>	
Comments from workshop attendees	<p>Yes, flexibility makes sense.</p> <p>Challenge is where $\frac{3}{4}$ floors are vacant. Smaller floorplate higher up. Bigger floorplate works for department stores but not others.</p>
Lisa O'Donnell	<i>What about outside CAZ?</i>
Comments from workshop attendees	Answer depends on which area are being spoken about e.g. Harrow Road only ground and 1 st and 2 nd . The downside of housing and retail is less relevant.
<p>5a) How can we support small/local/independent shops? 5b) Should we encourage a range of shop sizes?</p>	
Comments from workshop attendees	Rent levels and local cultural activities. For example, Howard De Walden estate initial low rent in Portman are through '1 Street back' looking at how smaller independent shops can flourish. The Council can make public realm excellent.
Councillor Connell	We need adequate provision for delivery on schemes already with consent. Small retailers are more likely to be white van man/ round robin. We need to link up with transport policies.
Councillor Bush	In Harrow Road the issues of parking is a serious one, Rent is also an issues as is the multiple ownership. Need good landlord awards to encourage good practice.
Comments from workshop attendees	Through sizes of unit.
<p>6. Should we continue to protect shops and services outside of our designated shopping centres?</p>	
<p>Other Questions?</p>	
Comments from workshop attendees	Touched on conflicts between residents and shops. These are often unforeseen issues associated with deliveries.

	<p>A4 – A5 night time economy outside areas specifically targeted like Soho. Perhaps a role for planning obligations.</p> <p>Viability, especially on independents. Respect conservation areas drive to keep setting but trade-off with other aspects of retail space. Need to understand offer and need – the whole framework.</p> <p>NWDR relief for charity shops then get 75% often come to WCC to get relief on the remainder. Consider secondary streets with concentration.</p>
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