

Outer Area Local and District Centres Briefing Note

April 2011

A survey was undertaken in April 2011 to assess the 'health' of local and district retail centres and to monitor the implementation of Local Plan policy SHO15.

Policy SHO15 states:

"Within the district and Local Centres, as defined on the Proposals Map, proposals for change of use from class A1 to other uses will only be permitted where;

- (i) the proportion of class A1 uses in the defined centre would not fall below 60% as a result; or
- (ii) the proposed use provides a service appropriate to the centre's position in the hierarchy, which is underrepresented in that centre or is a community use and there are no other units available in or adjacent to the centre, in which such a use could be accommodated."

Vacancies

District Centres

Overall out of 130 units in the 7 district centres, the number of vacant units decreased from 16 to 8. Vacancy rates have significantly decreased since the August 2010 survey. The average vacancy rate has **decreased** from 12.4% **to 6.6%**.

Local Centres

Overall out of 325 units in the 25 local centres, the number of vacant units decreased from 37 to 30. This was a **decrease** from 11.4% **to 8.2%**. For comparison April 2010 was 8.6% and so mid 2010 was a low point for vacancy rates but this has recovered to early 2010 rates.

Non- retail units

District Centres

Out of the total 130 units in the 7 district centres, the percentage of non-retail units **increased** slightly from 42.5% **to 43.7%**. The SHO15 policy threshold of 40% was exceeded in the same district centres as the last survey:

- DC01 Bowthorpe centre;
- DC03 Eaton centre;
- DC04 Plumstead Road centre;
- DC05 Aylsham Road/Mile Cross centre; and
- DC07 The Larkman centre.

Local Centres

Overall out of 325 units in the 25 local centres, the percentage of non-retail units **decreased** slightly from 43.8% **to 43.5%**. The SHO15 policy threshold was been exceeded in the same local centres as the last survey;

- LC01 Hall Road/ Trafalgar Street;
- LC02 Hall Road/Queens Road;
- LC03 Hall Road/Southwell Road;
- LC06 Unthank Road;
- LC07 St Augustine's Gate;
- LC10 Aylsham Road/Glenmore Gardens;
- LC12 Woodcock Road;
- LC15 Sprowston Road/Silver Road;
- LC16 Sprowston Road/Shipfield;

- LC17 Bishop Bridge Road;
- LC18 Earlham Centre West; and
- LC20 Colman Road, The Parade.

Conclusion

The retail survey for April 2011 shows a decrease in vacancy rates in both district and local centres. The average vacancy of around 6-8% is a promising indication that the current economic downturn is not affecting district and local centres too severely. For comparison, vacancy rates in 2007 were 3.1% and 5.8% for district and local centres respectively. The vacancy levels are close to pre-recession levels in comparison to August 2010 which showed vacancy rates of 11 to 12%.

The level of non-retail uses has remained relatively the same in district and local centres. The slight change in the figures results from new units or units being merged. Units were merged in Plumstead Road district centre and Woodgrove Parade local centre. Units were subdivided/newly created in Bishop Bridge Road and Colman Road/The Avenues local centres.

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