

Outer Area Local and District Centres Briefing Note

April 2010

A survey was undertaken in April 2010 to assess the 'health' of local and district retail centres and to monitor the implementation of Local Plan policy SHO15. An identical survey was also undertaken in July 2009 and this briefing note summarises the main findings.

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 seven district centres, the number of vacant units increased from 5 to 15. Units became vacant in all of the District Centres, with the highest numbers being 3 in Drayton Road centre and 2 in the Larkman. All other centres experienced a vacancy increase of 1 unit. The average vacancy rate has therefore **increased** from 3.5% to **12.09%**.

Local Centres

Overall out of 314 units in the 25 local centres, the number of vacant units reduced from 31 to 28. This was a **decrease** from 8.9% to **8.6%**.

Non- retail units

District Centres

Out of the total 130 units in the seven district centres, the percentage of non-retail units **increased** from 39.6% to **40%**. The SHO15 policy threshold was exceeded in the same district centres as last year:

- DC01 Bowthorpe Main Centre;
- DC03 Eaton Centre;
- DC04 Plumstead Road; and
- DC07 The Larkman.

Local Centres

Overall out of 314 units in the 25 local centres, the percentage of non-retail units **increased** from 38.3% to **39%**. The SHO15 policy threshold was been exceeded in the same local centres as last year;

- LC02 Hall Road/Queens Road;
- LC06 Unthank Road;
- LC07 St Augustine's Gate;
- LC10 Aylsham Road/Glenmore Gardens;
- LC15 Sprowston Road/Silver Road;
- LC16 Sprowston Road/Shipfield;
- LC17 Bishop Bridge Road; and
- LC20 Colman Road, The Parade.

Conclusion

The district centres have suffered more with increased vacancy rates within these areas. Local centres however marginally improved terms of the vacancy rates. There were marginal increases in the non-retail units within these centres. Part of this increase was due to a thorough survey of the district and local centre areas, with units such as health centres (Bowthorpe) and residential units (Woodcock Road) being included in the survey this year. They form part of the centre and must have at one time been part of the local centre through a different use. The loss of these uses must still be accounted in the overall vitality and viability of the centres.

The main policy implication of the findings of this retail survey is that the noted decline of the district centres is an important consideration in the review of the development management policies through the Local Development Framework for Norwich.

Jo Negus
Planner (Policy)
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