

SUBJECT:	Definition of Key Shopping Areas for Development Management Purposes	
REPORT OF:	Officer Management Team	- Director of Services
	Prepared by	- Head of Sustainable Development

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to request Members to adopt a definition of key shopping areas for use in development management.

2. Links to Council Policy Objectives

- 2.1 The Guidance links directly to Core Policy 11 Council's Adopted Core Strategy.
- 2.2 The Core Policies and this recommendation directly support the objective within the Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Plan for Thriving Economy - lifelong enterprise, the entrepreneurial heart of Britain.

3. Background

- 3.1 Changes to permitted development rules which came into effect on 6 April 2014 allow a change of use to residential (use class C3) from shops (use class A1 and A2) providing the change involves a shop not larger than 150 sq m. The change must also not have an impact on the adequate provision of services of the sort that may be provided by a building falling within Class A1 and A2 such as a post office (where there is reasonable prospect of the building being used) or, where the building is located in a key shopping area, on the sustainability of that shopping area. Current local policy defines District and Local centres but does not use the term key shopping area. This report suggests that the District and Local centres as defined in the Core Strategy and the Proposals Map be categorised as 'Key Shopping Areas' for the purpose of interpreting the new legislation.

4. Planning Policy

- 4.1 Core Policy 11 of the Core Strategy states that:

Proposals for new retail, office and other main town centre uses should enhance the vitality of centres in South Bucks, and support the following hierarchy:

- *District centres - Beaconsfield New Town and Gerrards Cross*
- *Local centres - Beaconsfield Old Town, Burnham, Farnham Common, Iver Village and Denham Green*

- 4.2 The policy goes on to state that Neighbourhood Centres will be protected (*but does not define them*).
- 4.3 The Government has introduced the new provisions in order to support the High Street: *"The government recognises the importance of ensuring a vibrant and varied high street, and retaining an adequate provision of services in other areas. A prior approval will enable local planning authorities to consider the potential impact of the loss of the retail unit, and whether there is a reasonable prospect of it being occupied by another retail use."*
- 4.4 Recent appeal decisions involving shops have recognised that changes of use from shops to hot food takeaway and restaurants are considered appropriate in the Local Centres.

Annual surveys of the district and local centres show a low vacancy rate generally and generally healthy town centres. The only Local Centre where regeneration and enhancement is required is Iver Village, but this too appears to be reasonably healthy.

- 4.5 In terms of Neighbourhood Centres, such as Richings Park and Stoke Poges, these are not defined in the policy and not shown on the Proposal Map and although the aim is to protect them, it may prove difficult to resist changes of use from shops until such time as more detailed guidance is prepared in the Development Management Local Plan.
- 4.6 It is therefore recommended that only District and Local Centres as defined in Core Policy 11 and as shown on the Proposals Map are designated as Key Shopping Areas where change of use to residential through the Prior Approval process will be subject to close scrutiny in terms of potential impact on the sustainability of the relevant shopping area. These changes will be monitored and will influence the development of more detailed policies.
5. **Resources, Risk and Other Implications**
- 5.1 Possible threat to the existence of Neighbourhood Centres from change of use.
6. **Recommendation**
- 6.1 Members of the Sustainable Development PAG advise the Portfolio Holder to recommend that Cabinet approve the new definition for Key Shopping Areas for development management purposes.

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Background Papers:	The Use Class change legislation https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/local-planning