

# CHAPTER 9: SHOPPING

## INTRODUCTION

- 9.1 Shopping is an essential activity for all sections of the local community, employees and visitors and is an important element of the local economy. The policies in this chapter aim to protect and enhance the area's shopping centres and facilities in order to increase the range, variety and quality of shopping and associated services available to the people of Crawley. The Local Plan must ensure that the future sub-regional shopping role of the town and its main centre is enhanced by providing opportunities for development in an increasingly dynamic retail sector and that the shopping environment meets the expectations of shoppers, retailers and other users.

## MAIN CHARACTERISTICS

- 9.2 Crawley's development as a New Town gave the opportunity to provide a locally based network of neighbouring shopping centres and parades, evenly distributed around a modern and accessible town centre. This was planned to have a consolidated, safe and modern main shopping area serving all of Crawley and beyond which was surrounded by a wider town centre commercial area of other businesses and important public uses and facilities.
- 9.3 Up to the mid 1970s, Crawley town centre developed in tandem with the growth of the town centre's shopping area. The opening of County Mall in 1992 enhanced the status of the centre by providing a wider range of large stores, national chain stores

- 9.6 Local neighbourhood shopping parades were intended to cater for local daily needs such as chemists, bakers, butchers, greengrocers and newsagents. While some of these uses remain in some parades, most have lost several of these shops or seen them amalgamated into one multi-purpose store. These uses have been replaced by other forms of retail operation, uses and services. Despite their relative decline, the neighbourhood parades and local shops perform an important local shopping function and remain a key part of the local community of most areas of Crawley.

## **PLANNING CONTEXT**

### **Government Guidance**

- 9.7 Planning Policy Guidance Note 6, 'Town Centres and Retail Development' , emphasises that local plans should aim to ensure the availability of a wide range of shopping opportunities while sustaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of town centres. For the purposes of interpreting Planning Policy Guidance Note 6 in Crawley, the main shopping area can be clearly identified as the area to which edge of centre and other shopping criteria can most appropriately be applied. The guidance introduces indicators and measures of viability and vitality against which to assess the potential impact of out-of-town retail developments. It emphasises the role of existing centres in establishing development patterns which minimise the need to travel and promote alternatives to the car, particularly through the use of public transport. This is re-emphasised in Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 on Transport.

### **Regional Guidance**

- 9.8 Regional Planning Guidance for the South-East recognises the importance of the social and economic function of town centres and that their focus of activity should be shopping. Wherever possible, retail development should be located within town centres to enable one trip to serve several purposes and to ensure accessibility for those without cars. Only when sites are not available within town centres should edge-of-town or out-of-town developments with good access to public transport be considered.

### **West Sussex Structure Plan 1993**

- 9.9 The Structure Plan identifies Crawley town centre as a sub-regional centre and seeks improvements to its services, facilities and infrastructure in order to consolidate its retail position. The Plan requires retail developments outside existing centres to complement them by only providing facilities which will not otherwise be provided. Such retail development must demonstrate it will not have any serious adverse impact on the vitality and viability of nearby existing centres.

## **STRATEGY, ISSUES AND OBJECTIVES**

- 9.10 The continued growth of Crawley's population and consolidation of its sub-regional shopping role will bring about a demand for new retail development. However, a recent retail study completed in September 1995 by consultants Hillier Parker for Crawley Borough Council has revealed that the main shopping area of Crawley, as defined on the Proposals Map, is going through a period of adjustment. How and where to provide for new retail development in Crawley is the main issue to be addressed by policies in this Chapter.

- 9.11 The retail study revealed that Crawley town centre was going through a period of adjustment. The availability of vacant retail floorspace and the relative strength of nearby competing centres indicated that Crawley had limited scope for extending its catchment area and market penetration up to the turn of the century. Consequently, it is necessary to take account of the vitality and viability of the main shopping area, its accessibility to the whole community, the affect of new retail development on other neighbourhood centres and to consider whether new retail development is a sustainable use of resources, particularly with regard to minimising the energy used for travel.
- 9.12 At present Crawley town centre is facing several problems, in particular how it can be regenerated to provide the type of shopping facilities and environment required in the future and how its status as a sub-regional centre can be consolidated and improved. It does, however, remain the most accessible location in the borough, especially by public transport, and several opportunities for new main shopping area development have been identified.
- 9.13 Town centres should not be considered solely as shopping centres. The vitality of the centre depends on achieving a mix of retail and non-retail uses, including leisure and entertainment uses. However, shopping is the prime function and consideration is needed to determine how much and where non-retail activity can be sustained without undermining the centre's primary shopping function.
- 9.14 The local shopping role of neighbourhood parades has come under increasing pressure from competing forms of retail operation, with the result that many local shops have been replaced by non-retail uses and shops with a catchment area wider than the local neighbourhood. While the vitality of the centre may be enhanced by a wider mix of retailers and services, it is important to ensure the neighbourhood parades retain their ability to cater for local daily needs, especially those of the less mobile sectors of the community.
- 9.15 Outside of the built-up area retail activity also occurs, mostly in the form of farm shop



When considering proposals for new retail development outside of the main shopping area the Council will have regard to the extent to which the Town Centre Strategy has been fulfilled and allocations developed and the vitality and viability of the centre.

9.23 The environment of the New Town centre, although pleasant, is in need of modernisation and improvement. The openness of certain areas of the centre provides an opportunity to introduce new facilities and to bring about complementary environmental improvements.

9.24 The important role of local neighbourhood parades in providing for the daily needs of local residents ought to be maintained, especially for those who are more dependant on them such as the disabled and elderly. Many of the neighbourhood parades are showing signs of age, inadequacies in their design and poorly maintained environments.

## **POLICIES**

### **GENERAL**

#### **Policy SH1**

**Planning permission will be granted for new retail development which**

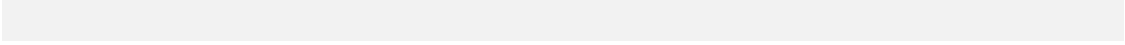
**Policy SH2**

**Planning permission will be granted for new retail development on the edge of the main shopping area subject to the following criteria being met:**

- (i) the development is of a scale and form, and in a location, which is compatible with the primary objective of sustaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of the main shopping area and town centre as a whole;**
- (ii) the development is in keeping with the character of the area and contributes to the image and attractiveness of the town centre;**
- (iii) the development is well integrated with and has good pedestrian links to the main shopping area;**
- (iv) the development cannot satisfactorily be accommodated within the main shopping area;**
- (v) the development is accessible by a variety of modes of transport;**
- (vi)**

development, developers will be required to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Council that they have thoroughly assessed all potential main shopping areas options first (this will include allocated sites, unidentified redevelopment and new development opportunities and vacant units). When carrying out this exercise, developers will be expected to be flexible in their store format, design, scale and car parking requirements. When major new retail development is considered appropriate, it should also reflect the quality, attractiveness and character of the centre and integrate fully with the main shopping area.

- 9.28 Accessibility to the whole community by a variety of means of transport is particularly important and locations which provide the opportunity to use modes of transport other than the car will be required. Developers should consider submitting retail impact studies which consider the likely impact of new retail proposals on the main shopping area of the town centre. Such studies should include evidence of approach to site selection, environmental impacts, and an assessment of accessibility and travel





Place, Southgate; Southgate Parade, Southgate; and Maidenbower Parade, Maidenbower.

Although the eastern end of Three Bridges Road is not a purpose built local shopping centre commonly associated with a residential neighbourhood, it also functions as a local neighbourhood centre. Proposals for major retail development in out of centre locations will be expected to provide a retail impact study and this will be a material consideration when assessing any application. Applications for developments over 2,500 sq.m should include a study, however, it may also be appropriate for much smaller proposals to include a study if there could be an impact on an existing centre. Such studies should include evidence of the approach to site selection, the impact, including cumulative impact with other retail proposals on the main shopping area and nearby neighbourhood centres, the effect of the proposal on local travel patterns, including the demand for travel to stores outside Crawley, and the accessibility of the proposal by alternative forms of transport. This is particularly important within the context of ensuring that a proposal is accessible to the whole community by forms of transport that are sustainable

*Implementation: CBC forward planning and development control processes, private sector and other developers.*

## TOWN CENTRE

- 9.33 The town centre boundary is defined on the Proposals Map. It includes the main shopping area, as defined by the cordon of roads surrounding the individual shopping frontages of policies SH9, SH10 and SH11. Where the main shopping area merges with other uses it has been necessary to divide between the two. The town centre boundary also includes commercial areas and a number of other town centre uses and facilities e.g. the college, library, police station and town hall.

## Town Centre Regeneration

### Policy SH4

**The Borough Council will work with other authorities and interests to achieve the regeneration of Crawley town centre with the aims and objectives of:**

- (i) consolidating and enhancing its sub-regional shopping role;**
- (ii) enhancing its physical environment and facilities;**
- (iii) improving the effectiveness and co-ordination of its management and maintenance;**
- (iv) enabling it to be developed and improved in a comprehensive and co-ordinated manner;**
- (v) creati/F2 12CID 78x5(iv)1\*n0 g86.304 1TQmodgrnJETQ78x5t17(€**

- 9.34 The design and layout of the shopping centre no longer meets all the expectations and requirements of retailers and shoppers today. As a consequence, the centre has not been able to take full advantage of the potential wider catchment area created by



- 9.36 The Boulevard occupies an important position within the town centre. It separates the main shopping areas from an area of major civic uses and important local employers. Partly as a consequence of traffic flows and its layout, including the parallel service road and car park, the environment of The Boulevard is not particularly pleasant. Moreover, the use of the street creates hazards and barriers to pedestrians moving between uses on both sides. Although the Town Centre Regeneration Strategy is mainly targeted at improvements to the main shopping areas, improvements to The

*Implementation: All CBC departments including town centre co-ordination, WSCC as Highway Authority, landowners, public, private and voluntary agencies under umbrella of Town Centre Forum.*

## Use of Upper Floors in Shopping Areas

### **Policy SH8**

**Proposals which bring into use or require a change of use of upper floors within the main shopping area will normally be permitted provided that they:**

- (i) enhance the variety and quality of facilities available in the town centre;**
- (ii) will not result in the visual deterioration of the building facade;**
- (iii) will not undermine the viability of an existing ground floor retail unit.**

9.38 The upper floors of shops are used for a variety of purposes often unconnected with the shops below. Office use is most common, although some upper floors are in residential use and others are used for storage or are vacant. The increased use of upper floors can make a valuable contribution to the town centre by increasing the amount of retail floor space available or by providing an opportunity for new complementary uses which prefer not to have a ground floor presence. Notwithstanding the change of use permitted by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order, 1995 the Borough Council will particularly encourage the retention of good standard residential accommodation on upper floors.

*Implementation: CBC forward planning and development control processes, private sector and other developers.*

### **Non-Retail Uses in the Town Centre**

9.39 There has been an increasing trend over several decades for various types of non-retail use to occupy ground floor frontages in the shopping centre. This originally occurred in peripheral areas although recently it has become increasingly noticeable in the main shopping area. Whilst it is recognised that a visit to some non-retail uses is a complementary part of a shopping trip, there is concern over the extent to which many non-retail uses should be permitted to encroach upon and dominate the main shopping area. This concern has normally focused upon the extent to which non-retail uses change people's perceptions of an area such that it is no longer viewed as part of the shopping centre. When this occurs it could undermine the viability of existing retail units and reduce the prospects of attracting new shops, particularly given that once a change of use to non-retail is permitted it is very rare for the unit to return to retail use.

9.40 The Town Centre Inset Map identifies those ground floor frontages within the main shopping area where limits are set to control the prominence, dominance and cumulative impact of non-retail uses on the shopping frontages. A Shopping frontage, for the purposes of Policies SH9 and SH10 is defined as a section or block of retail units that is physically separated from another block, for example by a road junction. It is considered to be that block of retail units which is perceived by shoppers as a

distinguishable frontage of shops. In the Core Area, Policy SH9 will apply to sectors (groups) of frontages, for example Queens Square frontages will be a sector and Queensway frontages will be another sector. In the Primary Shopping Area Policy SH10 will apply to each individual frontage rather than sectors. This is because each individual frontage is generally longer and so provides more scope for changes of use.

## **Core Shopping Area**

- 9.41 The Core Shopping Area, as identified on the Proposals Map, is centred around Queens Square and the main pedestrian routes to County Mall. This area is viewed as the most important retail area and so a high proportion of retail uses is considered appropriate within each defined sector. A2 and A3 uses can add to the variety of shops in the area and A3 uses in particular can extend the length of time shoppers stay within the shopping area as a whole. However, the function of the area could also be weakened and its attractiveness to shoppers eroded by the introduction of non-retail uses into prominent sites or by the creation of 'dead frontages' in which several non retail units dominate. In most places it is expected that this problem will occur

## **Primary Shopping Area**

- 9.42 The Primary Shopping Area, as identified on the Proposals Map, consists of very important shopping frontages which adjoin the core shopping area. As with the core shopping area, the introduction of Class A3 uses is considered complementary to the

of Government guidance, the Borough Council has had to reluctantly conclude it could not sustain a policy of resisting further changes of use to non-retail. However, it is still the Borough Council's intention to restore the High Street's character, appearance and function as a trading centre and, as such, only uses within the Class A2 or A3 of the Use Classes Order would be permitted. In order to enhance the prospects of restoring the area's trading function and to maintain the appearance of the area as, at least potentially, a shopping area, changes of use or alterations to premises will be required to maintain the basic form of a shop unit and a shop window with a window display. Guidance on the special requirements for shopfronts within the High Street Conservation Area is provided in the Conservation Area Statement. Proposals for amusement centres are dealt with separately within Policy SH19.

*Implementation: CBC development control process, private sector and other developers.*

## **Town Centre Development Opportunities**

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### **Policy SH12**

- 9.44 In addition to the identified sites, there could be other opportunities in the main shopping area for retail and associated development. Development of these will normally be encouraged provided that they enhance the shopping status, vitality and viability of the town centre and contribute to the consolidation of the centre's retail function. The Borough Council wishes to encourage a range of shopping provision including food shops and specialist shops in order to enhance the sub-regional shopping role of the town centre.

*Implementation: CBC forward planning and development control processes, private sector and other developers.*

### **Policy SH13**

**Land at the following sites within the main shopping area of the town centre is allocated for retail development and compatible town centre uses:**

- (1) Queens Square - western end;**
- (2) East side of The Martlets and Parkside car park-(Completed);**
- (3) Queensway/College Road (TC7) car park- (Completed);**
- (4) Cross Keys service area/ The Broadway car park;**

9.45 For Crawley town centre to develop its sub-regional shopping role and consolidate its main shopping area, it is appropriate to identify opportunities for new retail development with the intention of increasing the quality and range of town centre facilities and shops, including food shops and independent retailers. Five sites have been allocated for retail purposes within the main shopping area. Two of these sites at, (2) The Martlets/Parkside and (3)Queensway/College Road (TC7) have been completed during the plan period.

- A development at the western end of Queens Square could provide the opportunity for an impressive and well designed development that adds to the variety of activity within the town centre. This area is subject to ongoing regeneration works as part of the Town Centre Regeneration Strategy. The development of the western end of Queens Square would need to integrate with the regeneration of the rest of the Town Centre. Complementary uses or facilities, including leisure, cafes, restaurants or a specialist market are particularly appropriate. However, uses which require vehicular service access from the Broadway should make adequate provision for service parking in such a way as to not affect the use of and improvements to the Broadway. In particular, service vehicles may need to be restricted to certain times of the day when their activity will not adversely affect the main shopping function of the area.

- Cross Keys service area/ The Broadway car park area could be suitable for the development of a precinct of small shop units with other compatible town centre uses, paying particular attention to the site's Conservation Area status, the setting of St John the Baptist Churchyard and the need to form improved pedestrian links between the High Street and the main shopping area.

- The "Crawley Traders Market" in the High Street provides an opportunity for the redevelopment of a small arcade of specialist stores or shops. Upper floors could be used for small office suites. Proposals should include provision for a direct pedestrian link between the Orchard Street multi-storey car park and the High Street.

9.46 Planning briefs have been produced for Queens Square, The Martlets and Parkside car park, Cross Keys and the Crawleys Traders Market. It is intended that briefs setting out the planning requirements and guidelines will be produced for the other sites.

*Implementation: CBC forward planning and development control processes, private sector and other developers*

## **The Town Market**



- 9.47 The Town Market is a well used and popular facility which adds to the attractions of the town centre, bringing in shoppers from outside of Crawley. It is the Borough Council's intention to seek its retention within the High Street. This will help restore some of the High Street's trading function by attracting shoppers and, in due course, shops. This will also contribute to the Regeneration Strategy's objective of restoring the east-west balance of the town centre. It will be necessary for the design and management of the market to be compatible with the historic trading function, character and appearance of the High Street.

*Implementation: CBC Planning and Environmental Services including town centre co-ordination, WSCC as Highway Authority, market operators.*

## **NEIGHBOURHOOD PARADES AND LOCAL SHOPS**

- 9.48 Despite changes in consumer behaviour, primarily as a consequence of the increased use of the car for shopping purposes, local neighbourhood shopping facilities still play an important role in meeting the day-to-

- 9.49 Many neighbourhood parades have become vulnerable to the encroachment of non-retail uses such as estate agents, betting shops, and fast food establishments. Although these can often provide a useful local service, their extensive introduction can undermine the viability of existing units which cater for local shopping needs. Therefore, an assessment of the extent to which such encroachment would undermine a neighbourhood centre's role is required and would vary according to the size and function of each centre. If necessary, conditions will be imposed on any planning consent limiting the change of use to that specifically permitted. Where such uses would cater for a wider catchment area than the immediate local neighbourhood, it is necessary to consider whether, by attracting traffic from beyond the neighbourhood, the proposal could have an adverse impact on the local residential area. Local neighbourhood parades are important to the community. Consequently, other non-retail use proposals should reflect the nature and type of activity that occurs within these parades.

*Implementation: CBC forward planning and development control processes, private sector and other developers.*

## Improvements to Neighbourhood Parades

### **Policy SH17**

**The Borough Council will seek improvements in the overall environment, management and attraction of neighbourhood parades.**

- 9.50 The appearance of many of the neighbourhood centres is dated, reflecting the period in which they were developed. Several suffer from various problems including vandalism, poor security, lack of weather protection and inadequate maintenance often contributing to an overall poor environment. Modernisation can only occur on a gradual basis given the limited funds available. However, in the case of Broadfield Barton Neighbourhood Centre, opportunities may arise to undertake improvement of the centre in conjunction with treatment of the twin-deck car park which may have to be altered or replaced due to maintenance problems. Changes could include a new user-friendly car park, improvements to the shopping parade, better lighting and security measures and the introduction of further soft landscaping.

*Implementation: CBC Planning and Environmental Services and Property Construction Services, private sector and other developers.*

### **Policy SH18**

**Land within Broadfield housing areas 14 (Woodside) and 15A (Hillside) will be reserved for local shopping facilities to serve the Tollgate Hill area of Broadfield neighbourhood.**

- 9.51 The final stages of the development of Broadfield will result in nearly a thousand houses being more than half a mile from the existing neighbourhood centre. The Borough Council has indicated that a site to the south and east of William Morris Way could be made available for a shopping facility if sufficient retail demand exists.

*Implementation: CBC forward planning and development control processes, Property and Construction Services, private sector and other developers.*

## AMUSEMENT CENTRES

9.52 Amusement centres require special attention as their presence in town centres and other sensitive locations can cause concern to retailers, community groups, and the general public. Amusement centres are not considered to be suitable neighbours for schools, churches, hospitals, hotels, or residential property. Government advice contained in PPG6, "Town Centres and Retail Developments", indicates that amusement centres are most likely to be appropriate in secondary shopping areas or areas of mixed commercial uses and not normally in primary shopping areas. Much of the Secondary Shopping Area is designated as a conservation area where an amusement centre would be acceptable only if it can be proven that there would be no adverse impact upon the character and appearance of the area. The neighbourhood centres are unsuitable because of their location within residential neighbourhoods and the objective of the Borough Council to retain the shopping parades for meeting the daily shopping needs of the surrounding community. Any permission for an amus

petrol filling stations as shops should not be allowed to undermine the local shopping role of the neighbourhood parades which are normally more conveniently and safely