

## Alternative Use of Shop Units

### Policy Ret 9 Alternative Use of Shop Units in Defined Centres

In the City Centre Retail Core and town centres, change of use proposals which would undermine the retailing function of the centre will not be permitted. Detailed criteria for assessing proposals for the change of use of a shop unit to a non-shop use will be set out in supplementary guidance. Supplementary Guidance will detail an approach tailored to different parts of the city centre retail core and each town centre to be informed by town centre health checks which will assess the centres strengths, vitality and viability, weaknesses and resiliencies.

The change of use of a shop unit in a local centre to a non-shop use will be permitted provided:

- a) the change of use would not result in four or more consecutive non-shop uses and;
- b) the proposal is for an appropriate commercial, community or business use, which would complement the character of the centre and would not be detrimental to its vitality and viability.

259 This plan aims to protect the important retailing function of defined centres but recognises the benefits of a wide range of complementary service, leisure and other community uses. The right mix of shopping and other uses will vary in the different centres and in the case of the city and town centres, in different parts of the centre. The policy applies to ground floor units only or basement/first floor units that are directly accessed from the pavement.

260 Within the City Centre Retail Core, a strong, high quality retail offer is a key aspect of sustaining and enhancing the city centre and policies are required to ensure that shopping continues to be the predominant use. However in order to achieve a diverse, thriving and welcoming city, a more flexible approach to the introduction of

complementary uses that support the main shopping function and encourage use into the evening is proposed. Supplementary guidance will be prepared to guide the mix of uses in different parts of the City Centre Retail Core and set out criteria for assessing proposals for uses other than shops.

261 Previous local plans incorporated a standard approach to change of use applications in town centres based on identifying primary frontages where there should be a greater proportion of units in shop use. However, each town centre is different in terms of the current mix of uses and how well it is meeting the needs of those who live, work and shop in the surrounding area. In order to take account of these differences, this plan proposes a tailored approach for each town centre. Separate supplementary guidance will be produced to guide change of use applications in each of the nine town centres. The supplementary guidance may also recommend changes to the town centre boundaries to be included in the next Local Development Plan.

262 The policy aims to avoid areas of 'dead frontage' and reduced pedestrian flow which would detract from the character and vitality of the centre by requiring that at least one unit in every four is in shop use. Beyond this requirement, the policy applies a flexible approach to change of use applications in local centres provided the use will be beneficial to the local community such as providing services, hot food or entertainment facilities. In local centres, former shop units may also be suitable for business use, providing a beneficial use for vacant properties and opportunities for small start up businesses and job creation close to where people live.

### Policy Ret 10 Alternative Use of Shop Units in Other Locations

Outwith defined centres, planning applications for the change of use of a shop unit will be determined having regard to the following:

- a) where the unit is located within a speciality shopping street (defined on the Proposals Map and in Appendix B), whether the proposal would be to the detriment of its special shopping character
- b) where the unit is located within a predominantly commercial area, whether the proposal would be compatible with the character of the area
- c) whether the proposal would result in the loss of premises suitable for small business use
- d) whether there is a clear justification to retain the unit in shop use to meet local needs
- e) where residential use is proposed, whether the development is acceptable in terms of external appearance and the standard of accommodation created.

263 The purpose of this policy is to guide proposals for change of use involving shop units not located within defined centres.

264 Independent and specialist retailers may be found in secondary locations throughout the city. But their concentration in some streets in the Old Town and on the fringes of the City Centre has given these a distinctive shopping character and interest worthy of protection. The defined speciality shopping streets are Cockburn Street; High Street (parts) Lawnmarket and Canongate; Victoria Street and West Bow, Grassmarket; Jeffrey Street and St Mary's Street; Stafford Street, William Street and Alva Street in the New Town. More detailed information on the frontages to which Policy Ret 10 applies is provided in Appendix B.

265 In parts of the city, mainly the City Centre and Leith, there are concentrations of commercial uses including retail, food and drink, and entertainment uses which, although not fulfilling the role of a local centre, do make a positive

contribution to the vibrancy of the city. Proposals incompatible with the commercial character of such areas will be resisted.

266 Single convenience shops and parades of small shops play an important role in meeting neighbourhood shopping needs and creating a sense of community, particularly in areas not well served by the network of shopping centres. It may be necessary to resist the loss of shop units to ensure local needs, particularly for people without access to car, are met

267 The Council's Guidance for Business provides advice on relevant design and amenity considerations for the conversion of shop units to residential use.

### Policy Ret 11 Food and Drink Establishments

**The change of use of a shop unit or other premises to a licensed or unlicensed restaurant, café, pub, or shop selling hot food for consumption off the premises (hot food take-away) will not be permitted:**

- a) **if likely to lead to an unacceptable increase in noise, disturbance, on-street activity or anti-social behaviour to the detriment of living conditions for nearby residents or**
- b) **in an area where there is considered to be an excessive concentration of such uses to the detriment of living conditions for nearby residents.**

268 The provision of food and drink establishments in areas where people live is a recognisable component of urban living. However, such uses can cause a number of problems for local residents. Particular care will be taken to prevent an excessive concentration of hot food shops, pubs and bars in areas of mixed but essentially residential character. The Council's Guidance for Businesses identifies sensitive areas in this regard namely Tollcross, Grassmarket, Nicolson/Clerk Street and Broughton Place/Picardy Place and their environs.